NATION

Parbhani violence: Prohibitory orders remain, 50 detained

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BUSINESS

Rupee hits fresh all-time low, settles 4 paise lower

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SPORTS

Treesa-Gayatri pair wins 2nd match to keep semis hopes alive

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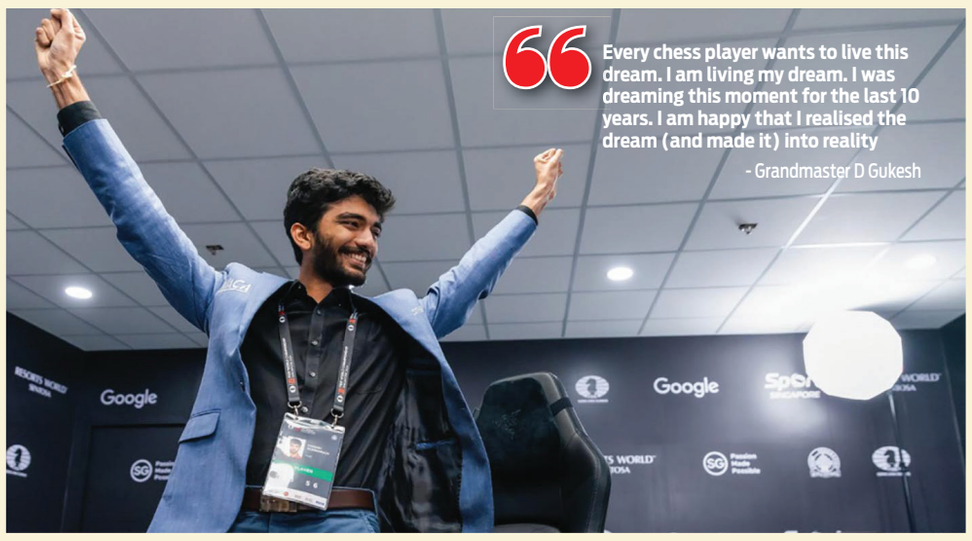
Gukesh beats Ding to be youngest world chess champ at 18


Every chess player wants to live this dream. I am living my dream. I was dreaming this moment for the last 10 years. I am happy that I realised the dream (and made it) into reality
- Grandmaster D Gukesh

D Gukesh reacts after beating title-holder China's Ding Liren in the 14th and last game of the FIDE World Chess Championship 2024, in Singapore, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

SINGAPORE, 12 DEC

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh on Thursday became the youngest world chess champion at 18 years after beating title-holder Ding Liren of China in the 14th and last game of a roller-coaster showdown that went right down to the wire.

Gukesh secured the requisite 7.5 points as against 6.5 of Liren after winning the last classical time control game of the 14-game match that seemed headed for a draw for most part. As title winner, he will get a major share of the USD 2.5 million prize purse.

"I was dreaming this moment for the last 10 years. I am happy that I realised the dream (and made it) into reality," the soft-spoken Chennaiiad told reporters after the historic triumph here. "Every chess player wants to live this dream. I am living my dream," said Gukesh. "I got a bit emotional because I was not expecting to win. But then I got a chance to press on," he added. The triumph was expectedly hailed across India with Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailing it as "historic and exemplary". "This is the result of his unparalleled talent, hard work and unwavering determination," Modi posted on X.

Before Gukesh's feat on Thursday, the legendary Garry Kasparov of Russia was the youngest world champion when he won the title at the age of 22, dethroning Anatoly Karpov in 1985. Gukesh had entered the match as the youngest ever challenger to the world crown after winning the Candidates tournament earlier this year.

He is the second Indian after the legendary Viswanathan Anand to win the global title. Anand, a five-time world champion, had last held the title in 2013 before going down to Magnus Carlsen.

"Every chess player wants to live this dream. I am living my dream," said Gukesh.

Gukesh, who won the 14th game against Liren after 58 moves in four hours, is the 18th world chess champion overall. If Thursday's game was also drawn, winner was to be decided in shorter duration tie-breaks on Friday.

Gukesh had won the third and 11th rounds before Thursday's decisive game, while the 32-year-old Liren emerged victorious in the opening and 12th games.

All other games were drawn in the match. "I came here suddenly and I lost the first game itself. Luckily while going back I had Vishy Sir (Anand) in the lift and he said 'I had only 11 games left you have 13'," Gukesh recalled. Anand was citing his 2006 first match over Veselin Topalov that he had eventually won after losing the first game. Interestingly, Anand had won that match in the last Classical (12th) game, with black pieces. Anand lost the title to Norwegian maverick Magnus Carlsen back in 2013. Liren, went for a rook trade and Gukesh pawed him almost instantly. He knew that it was his title to lose and it took just three more moves before the Chinese called it a day. *—PTI*

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Harassment alone not abetment to suicide: SC

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Mere harassment is not sufficient to hold someone guilty of the offence of abetting suicide, and there must be clear evidence of direct or indirect incitement, the Supreme Court has said. The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and PB Varale while delivering a verdict on an appeal challenging a Gujarat High Court order refusing to discharge a woman's husband and her in-laws for allegedly harassing her and driving her to suicide. The bench said the element of mens rea cannot simply be presumed or inferred and it must be evident and explicitly discernible.

The bench said to bring a conviction under Section 306 of the IPC, it was necessary to establish a clear mens rea to instigate or push the deceased to commit suicide. *—PTI*

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RG Kar case: Senior lawyer Vrinda steps down

KOLKATA, 12 DEC

Senior lawyer Vrinda Grover will no longer be representing the RG Kar Medical College rape-murder victim's family, sources said on Thursday. The chamber of Grover said in a statement that the concerned trial court, before which the trial in the rape-murder case is being held, has been informed accordingly and that the counsel's stand discharged from the matter.

The body of the on-duty post-graduate trainee doctor was found in the seminar room of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9 August. *—PTI*

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Meitei body urges PM to ban all Kuki militant groups

IMPHAL, 12 DEC

A Delhi-based Meitei organisation urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to ban all Kuki militant groups in Manipur and to stop alleged appeasement of the Kukis under the name of 'Suspension of Operations' (SoO). The SoO pact was signed by the Centre, the Manipur government and two conglomerates of Kuki militant outfits – Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and the United People's Front (UPF). Delhi Meitei Coordinating Committee also called for protection of territorial integrity of Manipur where ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kukis killed250 since May last year. *—PTI*

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SC halts surveys, lawsuits in religious places

SC mandated that lower courts refrain from any procedural actions

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

The Supreme Court of India on Thursday prohibited all courts across the country from entertaining new lawsuits and issuing any interim or final orders in ongoing cases related to the reclamation of religious sites, particularly mosques and dargahs.

The directive came from a bench led by Chief Justice Sanjiv Khanna, which has put a temporary stop to around 18 cases filed by Hindu groups seeking surveys of the original religious status of 10 mosques, including the Gyanvapi Mosque in Varanasi and the Shahi Idgah Masjid in Mathura. The clarity from the court aims to prevent further legal actions pending the Supreme Court's examination of the constitutional validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

This Act prohibits any alteration of the religious character of places of worship as they stood on 15 August 1947 and was designed to maintain communal harmony. Notably, the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute at Ayodhya is exempt from its provisions.

SC asks Centre respond to various pleas within 4 weeks **PHOTO: PTI**

Supreme Court has given the central government four weeks to file its reply to the various pleas.

During the hearing, various petitions were discussed, including those challenging sections of the 1991 Act that critics argue limit judicial recourse to reclaim religious sites. The court sought to clarify the legality and reach of the law and mandated that lower courts refrain from any procedural actions, such as surveys, during the ongoing deliberations. Opposing the sweeping order, senior advocate J Sai Deepak argued that parties had not been adequately consulted. However, the Chief Justice emphasised the necessity of the Supreme Court's oversight in such significant matters, indicating that lower courts should avoid overreach while the higher bench reviews the law's implications.

The Supreme Court has also requested a response from the central government regarding the pending cases and set a timeline for further submissions, indicating that the matter will be revisited in eight weeks. *—PTI*

DKS says one must 'kick the door to get power'; BJP asks 'you joining us?'

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's comments in the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, where he credited astrology for shaping his political journey, sparked a lively debate. He recounted how, during former chief minister SM Krishna's cabinet, he had to "kick the door" to secure a ministerial post.

The night before the swearing-in ceremony in 1999, after discovering he had been excluded, Shivakumar consulted his astrologer, Dwarakanath.

"The astrologer told me that I wouldn't get the ministerial post easily," Shivakumar said. "He advised me that I wouldn't get a berth unless I 'kicked and demanded' it."

Following this advice, Shivakumar went to Krishna's residence around 2am and insisted on being included.

Krishna convinced the High Command, and Shivakumar was inducted into the ministry.

The remarks prompted Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka to ask, "From his statements, it's clear he can't achieve anything without kicking doors or people. So, whose doors will you kick next to become Chief Minister?" He also mentioned that Shivakumar's astrologer had predicted he must become Chief Minister by January 2025, or miss the opportunity due to unfavourable stars.

Shivakumar said, "If I reveal what my astrologer told me, over 30 BJP and JD(S) MLAs might switch sides." Ashoka quickly retorted, "Does that mean you might join BJP?" causing laughter in the assembly. *—Salar News*

7 naxalites killed in Chhattisgarh encounter

NARAYANPUR, 12 DEC

At least seven Naxal militants were killed during an encounter with security forces in Narayanpur district, Chhattisgarh, on Thursday, according to a senior police official.

The gunfight erupted around 3am in the forests of south Abujhmaad as a joint team comprising the police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) conducted an anti-Naxalite operation.

Following the cessation of gunfire, the bodies of seven Naxalites, all in uniform, were recovered from the scene. *—PTI*

AMID CONTROVERSY

1 nation, 1 elections gets Cabinet nod

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved two bills, including one to amend the Constitution to implement "one nation, one election", and the draft legislations are likely to be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing winter session, sources said.

As of now, the Cabinet has given its nod to draft legislations to hold simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and legislative assemblies only, the sources said.

While a high-level committee led by former president Ram Nath Kovind had also proposed holding the municipality and panchayat polls along with the national and state elections in a phased manner, the Cabinet has decided to stay away, "as of now", from the manner in which local body elections are conducted. The Constitution amendment bill to hold simultaneous polls will not require ratification by at least 50 per cent of the states, the sources noted. Another Constitution bill proposed was aimed at creating provisions to hold simultaneous elections to municipalities and panchayats, along with the elections to the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, by inserting a new Article 324A. *—PTI*

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11 Panel recommendations for One nation, One elections

- Frequent elections strain the economy; the panel suggests this burden can be alleviated.
- The first phase involves aligning LS, state Assembly, municipal, and panchayat election dates.
- After a general election, the President will notify the date for the LS to convene.
- New state Assemblies will have a short term to align with the next general election date.
- The panel recommends forming a group to oversee the execution of election reforms.
- Introduce Article 324A for simultaneous elections of Panchayats and Municipalities.
- New elections will be called in case of a hung parliament or no-confidence motion.
- Conduct Lok Sabha and state assembly elections simultaneously, in phases.
- If a new LS poll occurs due to a hung parl, the new house will serve the remaining term.
- EC should ensure the procurement of EVMs and VVPATs for efficient election management.
- A unified voter roll and ID system will be implemented for all elections.

MILESTONE ACHIEVED

ISRO's CE20 cryogenic engine clears key test

PHOTO: X/@ISRO

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

ISRO on Thursday said it has achieved a major milestone after its CE20 cryogenic engine passed a critical test in ambient condition, featuring restart enabling systems.

According to ISRO, this success was a vital step for future missions. "ISRO has successfully carried out the sea level hot test of its CE20 Cryogenic Engine featuring a nozzle area ratio of 100 at ISRO Propulsion Complex, Mahendragiri, Tamil Nadu on 29 November," ISRO said.

The indigenous CE20 cryogenic engine developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre is powering the upper stage of the Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM-3) and has been qualified to operate at a thrust level of 19 tonne, ISRO explained. "Recently, the engine was qualified for the Gaganyaan mission with a thrust level of 20 tonne and also to an uprated thrust level of 22 tonne for the future C32 stage, towards enhancing the payload capability of LVM3 launch vehicle," ISRO said. The performance of a multi-element igniter that is required for engine restart capability was also demonstrated during this test.

ISRO said that the main concern during testing at sea level included flow separation inside the nozzle, which leads to severe vibrations and thermal problems at the flow separation plane leading to possible mechanical damage of the nozzle.

In order to mitigate this issue, the flight acceptance tests for CE20 engines are currently being performed at the High-Altitude Test facility, thereby adding complexity to the acceptance testing procedure, it added. *—PTI*

WOMEN-ONLY BIKE TAXI

Ride-hailing app Uber on Thursday launched Uber Moto Women, a first-of-its-kind service in City offering women-only bike rides **PHOTO: X/UBER**

BJP MLAs barge into Speaker's chamber

Confrontation came amid debate over lathicharge on Panchamasali protesters in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 12 DEC

Tensions flared in the Assembly on Thursday as BJP MLAs barged into Speaker UT Khader's chamber, expressing strong objections to his handling of the proceedings. The confrontation came amidst heated debates over the recent police lathi charge on Panchamasali Lingayat protesters, with the ruling Congress and Opposition BJP trading accusations.

The issue arose when Congress MLA Vijayanand Kashappanavar, himself a leader of the Panchamasali Lingayat community, criticized the decision of previous BJP government to scrap the 4 per cent Muslim reservation and reallocate it equally between the Lingayat and Vokkaliga communities.

He alleged that the BJP government, under Basavaraj Bommai, had backtracked on its decision by assuring the Supreme Court it would not implement the reservation changes.

BJP MLAs and MLCs protest against the lathicharge on Panchamasali protesters, in Belagavi on Thursday **PHOTO:PTI**

BJP members objected, insisting that the discussion focus solely on the police action during Tuesday's protests near Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, where the Panchamasali Lingayat community demanded inclusion in the 2A category of the OBC reservation matrix (15 per cent), as opposed to the current 3B category (5 per cent). The protests turned violent earlier this week, with stone pelting from demonstrators and subsequent lathi charges by police. During the Assembly debate, Kashappanavar accused the BJP of misleading the community and the Panchamasali seer, alleging that the protest was "sponsored and instigated" by the party.

He also claimed RSS members were involved in the stone pelting, sparking a heated exchange between BJP and Congress MLAs.

The situation escalated when Speaker Khader allowed Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda to speak after Home Minister G Parameshwara had already addressed the lathi charge issue. BJP MLAs argued that their voices should have been heard first. Gowda criticized the saffron party, blaming its past policies for the "injustice" faced by the Panchamasali Lingayat community, citing the BJP's affidavit to the Supreme Court on reservation issues.

Angered by Gowda's statement, BJP MLA Sunil Kumar raised a point of order, questioning why the Minister was permitted to speak.

The Speaker dismissed the objection, prompting BJP members to raise slogans and tear papers in protest —*PTI*

Govt taking steps to control atrocities against women, minor girls: Minister

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday said the government is "actively working" to control atrocities against women and minor girls in the State. He also mentioned that five lakh cameras have been installed across the State to prevent crime. Responding to a question by S Ravi in Legislative Council, Parameshwara saidthe state government is taking cases of "atrocities against women and minor girls seriously". —*PTI*

MLC flays BJP for backing agitators

Former minister and MLC H Vishwanath on Thursday condemned the State BJP leaders for extending support to Panchamasali Lingayat community who are holding agitation against the state government seeking inclusion of community under 2 A category. Speaking to reporters at a press conference, he also criticised the Panchamasali Seer Basava Mrtyunjaswamy for taking part in the agitation and dividing rift in the society.He also said that Panchamasalis were already enjoying reservation under backward classes category 3B. —*Salar News*

Minor, father booked over stunts on scooter

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

A minor boy and his father have been booked under the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act after the traffic police caught the boy performing stunts on a scooter in Pulikeshi Nagar. The incident occurred during a random vehicle check conducted by officials from Pulikeshi Nagar and Banaswadi traffic police stations on Wednesday. The boy was found engaging in wheelies and other stunts, causing a nuisance on the road. Upon confirming that he was underage, the police seized the scooter and filed an FIR against both the boy and his father, who is the registered owner of the vehicle. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Traffic, East, Kuldeep Kumar Jain stated that underage driving offenses hold both the minor and their parent or guardian accountable. "The penalty can go up to Rs 25,000, and the guardian could face up to three years of imprisonment," he said. —*Salar News*

MBBS student dies as bike collides with goods auto

MYSURU, 12 DEC

A Kerala-based MBBS student was killed when he the scooter he was riding along with his friend collided against a goods auto on National Highway near Hirikate gate in Gundlupet taluk on Wednesday. According to police, the deceased has been identified as Mohammed Farhan Habib ,22. The incident took place when they were heading towards Waynad. The other individual sustained minor injuries. —*Salar News*

Failure is key to success: Applied Materials official

MYSURU, 12 DEC

"Failure is one of the most fundamental aspects of our learning," stated Anuj Pratap Singh, Deputy Director of Software Development at Applied Materials India, during the Grand Finale of the Smart India Hackathon (SIH) 2024. The event, organised by Vidyavardhaka College of Engineering (VVCE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell and AICTE, took place at the VVCE Kempegowda Indoor Sports Complex on Wednesday. Singh emphasised the importance of perseverance and learning from setbacks, likening the journey to mastery in cricket through consistent practice. He encouraged students to remain inquisitive and unafraid to ask questions. VVCE Principal B Sadashivegowda urged participants to utilise the competition as a platform for addressing real-world challenges, propelling India as an innovation hub. This year's SIH features 24 teams and approximately 200 participants from prestigious institutions, all striving to find innovative solutions to various problems posed by AICTE and Autodesk Inc —*Salar News*

Three die in separate road accidents in City

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

Three lives were tragically lost in two separate road accidents reported in the city on Thursday, highlighting ongoing traffic safety concerns. In the first incident, a 24-year-old software engineer, Kumar Kurakula, was fatally crushed by a tipper truck near the SJ Park junction while riding from KR Market to his home in Marathahalli. The accident occurred at around 12.55am, according to Halasuru Gate traffic police. In the second incident, two individuals were killed in a collision between a canter truck, carrying chicken, and a tipper truck near the Ayurvedic hospital in Nallurahalli. The victims have been identified as Lakshmi Narayana, 30, a canter truck driver from Andhra Pradesh; and his assistant, Moin Zohid, 22, a resident of Manipur. —*Salar News*

Bengaluru to have cloudy sky with rains today: IMD

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

Rains lashed Bengaluru and parts of the south interior and coastal districts of Karnataka on Thursday, causing traffic congestion in the state capital.

However, Bengaluru city and its neighbourhood areas are likely to witness a generally cloudy sky with moderate rain likely in some areas on Friday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

In a statement, the IMD attributed the weather to a well-marked low pressure area over the Gulf of Mannar and neighbourhood, with the associated upper air cyclonic circulation extending up to mid-troposphere levels persisting.

The system is very likely to continue to move west–northwest towards south Tamil Nadu and weaken gradually during the next 12 hours, it said.

Rain lashed Bengaluru on Thursday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

According to the IMD, light to moderate rain occurred at isolated places over Dakshina Kannada, Udupi districts and at many districts of south interior Karnataka.

Isolated heavy rain is likely to occur over Mandya, Kolar Chikkaballapura, Tumkur, Mysuru, Bengaluru Rural and Bengaluru Urban districts, but dry weather is very likely to prevail over Uttara Kannada and north interior Karnataka areas till December 13.` —*PTI*

CAKE CARNIVAL

The City Cake Show, organised by Institute of Baking and Cake Art and MyBakersMart, features cakes modelled on singer Arijit Singh and a 20-foot-tall Christmas tree adorned with edible ornaments, marshmallows and a working toy train. With a theme celebrating artistic expression across diverse forms and cultures, the exhibition runs from 13 December to 1 January 2025, at Palace Grounds in Bengaluru from 10am to 9pm **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

2 ARRESTED IN DOUBLE MURDER CASE

Police have arrested two Nepali citizens on Thursday for Sunday's killing of two men in Yelahanka following an altercation allegedly over messaging and video calling a woman.

The victims, Vikram Singh, 21, a Nepal citizen working as a security guard, and Chhoto Toori, 33, who hailed from Bihar, were found dead with multiple injuries near a chemical factory where Singh worked, police said.

An altercation broke out over the woman, who was in a relationship with one of the accused, on Sunday while the victims were having dinner at the factory premises where Singh also lived. Both victims, Sammer and Sangam, were known to the accused. —*PTI*

WOMAN ASSAULTS LOVER'S WIFE

Two separate incidents registered in Narasimharaja police station where one case is of assault and another of attempted sexual assault in the city.

The first case involves Santosh Kumar, a resident of Lingadheerahalli Layout, Bengaluru, and his lover Shilpa, who allegedly assaulted his wife, Shwetha, and their daughter for questioning his extramarital affair. In a second case, Amanulla Khan, a house owner in Mysuru, has been accused of attempting to sexually assault a medical student from Kerala. The student had been staying in Khan's house since June. -*Salar News*

JILTED LOVER KILLS WOMAN, ENDS LIFE

A security guard allegedly murdered a 26-year-old woman and later took his own life by hanging himself from a tree near Nallurahalli Lake in the City. The Marathahalli police identified the two deceased as Mithun Mondal and Ooha Mondal, both originally from West Bengal. According to police, Mithun had been pressuring Ooha to enter into a relationship with him and leave her husband. She rejected his repeated advances. On Wednesday evening, Mithun allegedly attacked her with a dagger. —*Salar News*

CRIME BEAT

Mother ends life after killing two children

A 36-year-old woman allegedly took her own life after strangling her two young children at an apartment in Kodigehalli. Police suspect that a marital dispute may have driven her to take the extreme step. The incident, which came to light on Wednesday night, involved Kusuma, her six-year-old son Shreyan, and her two-year-old daughter Sharvi. The Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bengaluru North-East, confirmed the details to Salar News.

The incident was discovered when her husband Suresh returned home and found the lifeless bodies of his wife and children.

Police recovered a death note, purportedly written by Kusuma, which stated, "We are solely responsible for our deaths." —*Salar News*

UP COPS IN THE DARK

Techie's suicide: Wife's mother and brother flee

JAUNPUR, 12 DEC

The mother-in-law and the brother-in-law of techie Atul Subhash, who committed suicide in Bengaluru, fled their home in Jaunpur on Thursday, even as Uttar Pradesh Police said it was yet to receive any official communication from Karnataka.

The 34-year-old techie ended his life on Monday in Bengaluru, alleging harassment at the hands of his estranged wife and her family. A case of abetment to suicide was registered against his wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, father Anurag and uncle Sushil.

Around 1 am, Nisha Singhania and her son Anurag alias Piyush Singhania left their home in the Khowa Mandi area of Jaunpur on a motorcycle and have since not returned, a police official said.

Purported video clips on social media also showed them leaving the home around midnight.

"We are yet to receive any official communication from the Bengaluru Police over this

Atul Subhash **PHOTO: PTI**

case," said Jaunpur Superintendent of Police Ajaypal Sharma.

He said there was a routine-level of police deployment in the Khowa Mandi area as required for law and order maintenance.

In her complaint, Nikita mentioned that she married Subhash on 26 April, 2019 and that her husband and in-laws were unhappy with the wedding gifts from her parents. They demanded an additional Rs10 lakh. "They started torturing me physically and mentally for dowry. When I told my parents about the harassment and dowry, my parents told me that everything will be fine. But no improvement of any kind came in my husband and in-laws," Nikita said. —*PTI*

UTTARAHALLI ROAD TO HAVE TRAFFIC CURBS TODAY

BENGALURU 12 DEC

Vehicular traffic will be blocked on the Uttarahalli Main Road between 11.30am and 1pm to facilitate Golden Chariot procession organised by the Veeranjaneya Temple on Friday, the Bengaluru traffic police (BTP) said.

The BTP has made the following alternate routes: Motorists driving from Kengeri towards Electronic City can take a left turn before the Patalamma temple and continue driving on the Post Office Road. Motorists driving from Banashankari to Kengeri should take a right turn near Kadirenahalli and drive towards Chennamma Circle. All vehicles driving from Majestic to Uttarahalli must take a right turn near Chikkalasandra. —*Salar News*

POST COVID

State achieves over 9% GSDP growth

BENGALURU, 12 DEC

India's states have demonstrated remarkable economic resilience in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with 25 states achieving over 7 per cent growth in their Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) during FY22 and FY23, according to a report by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI).

Among these, 17 states surpassed an impressive 9 per cent growth rate, with Karnataka, Gujarat, Kerala, Telangana, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Odisha standing out for their robust economic performance during 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Karnataka have excelled in industrial and technological advancements, contributing significantly to nation's GDP, according to a report **PHOTO: X**

The PHDCCI report highlights the sectoral strengths that define individual states and their contributions to India's economic growth. Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh have emerged as leaders in agricultural production, ensuring food security for the nation.

In terms of industrial and mineral wealth, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha have leveraged their rich resources to drive industrial growth, while Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Karnataka have excelled in industrial and technological advancements, contributing significantly to the nation's GDP.

Tourism-centric states such as Kerala, Rajasthan, and Goa have capitalized on India's rich cultural heritage, boosting foreign exchange earnings and supporting the economy.

Infrastructure development and sustainability have been key focus areas in recent years. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh have made substantial progress in infrastructure projects, while Rajasthan and Gujarat have taken the lead in renewable energy initiatives, aligning with India's sustainable development goals. —*ANI*

Shiv Sena blocks MLA's visit to M'rashtra temple

BELAGAVI, 12 DEC

As previously warned, Shiv Sena (UBT) faction workers obstructed Karnataka elected representatives from visiting Maharashtra during the Belagavi legislative winter session. On Wednesday night, around a dozen Shiv Sena workers, led by Kolhapur district president Vijay Devane, gathered near the Ambabhavani temple to prevent Karnataka MLA Prabhu Chauhan and his followers from entering. After a 15-minute discussion, they were allowed to take 'darshan' of Ambabhavani.

MLA Prabhu, representing the Aurad assembly constituency in Kalyan Karnataka, engaged with the Shiv Sainiks

MLA Prabhu Chauhan **PHOTO: X**

in Marathi, which helped diffuse the situation and led to reasoned debate. The Shiv Sena responded after Karnataka had barred the Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES), a pro-Maharashtrian organisation in Karnataka, from holding a convention protesting the assembly session in Belagavi. Politicians were also blocked from attending the inaugural convention on 9 December. —*Salar News*

Country not equipped for simultaneous polls: Oppn

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Opposition parties on Thursday raised concerns over bills cleared by the government for holding simultaneous elections and said larger consultations are required, even as ruling NDA leaders asserted the burden on the exchequer will be lessened.

The Union Cabinet had approved bills to implement One Nation, One Election, and sources said the draft legislations are likely to be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing Winter Session.

Opposition MPs questioned if the country is logistically ready to hold simultaneous elections, pointing out that recent polls in Maharashtra and Jharkhand could not be held together with that in Haryana and Jammu and Kashmir.

Minister of State for Agriculture Bhagirath Chaudhary welcomed the move and said, "One Nation, One Election will be good for the nation. It will help in saving people's money."

He also dismissed the reservations expressed by opposition, and said, "They are in a habit of opposing everything."

BJP's ally Lok Janshakti Party (RV) MP Shambhavi Choudhary also welcomed the move. "This is an ambitious bill, LJP has supported it... Every six months, there is an election in some state, and leaders focus on that. Many times, representatives are also not able to give time in Parliament. Resources are wasted," she said.

Draft legislations of One Nation, One Election are likely to be introduced in Parliament in the ongoing Winter Session **PHOTO: PTI**

"One Nation, One Election sounds good, if the nation can go in that direction, nothing like it. But what is the reality? Is the Election Commission ready for it? Do we have enough forces, infrastructure?" Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Anil Desai asked.

"J&K, and Haryana elections could have been held together with Maharashtra but it was not done. Even the Jharkhand election was held in two phases... If government has some solution, it can be discussed. But in the present situation, it does not appear they can do it," Desai said.

Congress Lok Sabha member K Suresh said, "Our party has already cleared our stand from the beginning... We are opposing it. Entire opposition is opposing it," he said.

- Opposition MPs questioned if the country is logistically ready to hold simultaneous elections after recent polls

CPI(M) Rajya Sabha member John Brittas said, "One nation, one election, is part of their slogan 'one leader, one country, one ideology, one language...' It's against the federal spirit of the country." —*PTI*

Punjab: Dallewal's fast-unto-death enters day 17

CHANDIGARH, 12 DEC

Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, whose fast-unto-death entered seventeenth day on Thursday, wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, saying that ensuring minimum support price to every farmer is like the fundamental right to live. Dallewal has been on a fast-unto-death at the Khanauri border since 26 November to press the Centre to accept demands including a legal guarantee to the MSP on crops. Meanwhile, Samyukta Kisan Morcha leaders Rakesh Tikait and Harinder Singh Lakhowal will visit the Khanauri border to meet Dallewal on Friday. Punjab Assembly Speaker. —*PTI*

Three Prepak-Pro cadres arrested in Manipur

IMPHAL, DEC 12

Police in Manipur's Thoubal district arrested three members of the banned militant outfit, the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (Prepak-Pro), on Wednesday. The trio was apprehended during a coordinated effort by the Commando Unit Thoubal and the Assam Rifles, following reports of their presence in the Thoubal Athokpam area. The arrested individuals have been identified as Nambram Indrajit Singh, Rajkumar Mohen Sana, and Warepam Albert Meitei Thoi. In their possession, authorities discovered a grenade, demand letters associated with Prepak-Pro, three mobile phones, and a motorcycle. In a related operation, security forces in the Churachandpur districts recovered ten firearms and a substantial cache of ammunition. —*PTI*

Delhi polls: Poster war intensifies among parties

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

In the run-up to the Delhi Assembly polls, streets and public places in the national capital are awash with campaign posters as political parties vie for the voters' attention. The ruling AAP and its closest rival, BJP, dominate the poster war, sending across political messages like "Phir Layenge Kejriwal" to "Ab Nahi Sahenge, Badal Ke Rahenge" and putting up banners at vantage points like billboards, main roads, residential colonies, walkways and marketplaces across the city. Meanwhile, AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal on Thursday announced the launch of the Mukhya Mantri Mahila Samman Yojna to give a monthly assistance of Rs 1,000 to women in Delhi, and promised the amount would be raised to Rs 2,100 after the elections. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Stalin, Vijayan push for anti discrimination fight

KOTTAYAM, 12 DEC

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and his Tamil Nadu counterpart M K Stalin on Thursday highlighted the spirit of unity demonstrated by leaders like 'Periyar' E V Ramasamy in abolishing the discrimination that prevailed in society a century ago and called for the continuation of that struggle against the differences existing in the modern era. Both chief ministers spoke at a public meeting held at Vaikom Beach in this district after inaugurating the renovated Thanthai Periyar Memorial and Periyar Library, established in honour of Dravidar Kazhagam founder E V Ramasamy. Stalin inaugurated the memorial and library in the presence of Vijayan to commemorate the culmination of the centenary of the Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25), which was fought for the rights of lower castes to access roads leading to the famous Mahadeva Temple. —*PTI*

RS, LS adjourned amid ruckus

TMC's Kalyan says sorry to Scindia; LS to begin 2-day Constitution debate today

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha again faced adjournments today amid uproar over the BJP alleging Congress' links with US hedge fund tycoon George Soros.

The Lok Sabha will on Friday begin a two-day debate on the Constitution to mark the beginning of the 75th year of its adoption in the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to reply to the two-day debate on the Constitution in the Lok Sabha on Saturday, sources said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will initiate the debate on the Constitution in the Lok Sabha, while Union Home Minister Amit Shah is expected to initiate a similar debate in the Rajya Sabha, said government sources.

Rajya Sabha proceedings were adjourned as the members of the treasury and opposition benches traded charges over a no-trust motion brought against Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar and the BJP's allegations of the Congress leadership's "links" with billionaire investor George Soros.

The Upper House has been witnessing a ruckus as the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been alleging links between the Congress and Soros, and has also slammed the Opposition for moving the motion against Dhankhar.

Several Opposition MPs on Thursday protested inside Parliament complex carrying placards of different Hindi letters that jointly read 'desh bikne nahin denge' (we won't let the country be sold off) and raised slogans to reiterate their demand of a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani issue **PHOTO: PTI**

> **RS Chairman has consistently suppressed freedom of expression of Opposition**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Leader of Oppn in the House

The first adjournment of the day happened shortly after the House met at 11 am, when it was adjourned till 2 pm, and then for the day.

Dhankhar said he had given a ruling earlier rejecting five notices and the sixth notice given by Congress MP Renuka Chowdhury regarding alleged derogatory statements made by an Allahabad High Court judge is also rejected.

Kalyan Banerjee submits written apology for remarks against Scindia

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Thursday said that TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee has submitted a written apology for his remarks against Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia besides apologising. As soon as the House met, some members belonging to the ruling alliance stood up to raise the issue of the remarks made by Banerjee.

However, Birla intervened and said whatever happened on Wednesday was unfortunate and no member should make any personal remark against any fellow member.

Without taking the name of Banerjee, he said any remark against women is in bad taste and it hurts their dignity and honour. —*PTI*

Gadkari on accidents: Feel ashamed abroad

"When I go to attend international conferences where there is a discussion on road accidents, I try to hide my face," Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday, underlining he had set a target to reduce accidents by 50 per cent when he first took charge as the Road Transport and Highways Minister.

TMC's Ghose moves privilege motion against Rijiju

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Trinamool Congress' Rajya Sabha MP Sagarika Ghose on Thursday submitted a privilege motion notice against Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju for making a derogatory remark against opposition leaders in the Upper House.

The notice has been signed by 60 leaders from Opposition parties, a source said.

"Yesterday in the house, addressing the opposition, Rijiju said you all are not worthy of being in this house... The Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, instead of doing his best to run Parliament smoothly, has chosen to repeatedly insult the opposition," Ghose told reporters.

She said she had moved a privilege motion against Rijiju for abusing his office with his "diatribes and unparliamentary language." —*PTI*

Sagarika Ghose **PHOTO: PTI**

Avanti Srinivas **PHOTO: PTI**

Ex-YSRCP minister Avanti quits; flags lack of respect

AMARAVATI, 12 DEC

M Srinivasa Rao, commonly known as Avanti Srinivas, a senior leader of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and former Andhra Pradesh minister, has announced his resignation from the party, citing 'personal reasons.' In his resignation letter to party chief YS Jagan Mohan Reddy, Rao expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of respect for party functionaries and cadres within the organisation.

In addition to resigning from the YSRCP, Rao has also stepped down from his role overseeing the party's affairs in the Bheemili Assembly constituency. He has thanked the former chief minister for the opportunities he received during his time in politics.

Rao, an education tycoon, voiced concerns over the treatment of YSRCP leaders and activists over the past five years, indicating that they have suffered vastly. He strongly opposed the suggestion for party members to initiate protests against the TDP-led National Democratic Alliance government less than a year after the recent Assembly elections. Rao stated that any political organisation should operate democratically rather than unilaterally.

The YSRCP faced a significant defeat in the 13 May elections, which resulted in N Chandrababu Naidu's return to power, further highlighting the challenges the party now faces. —*PTI*

Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak gets Prez's assent

The bill that seeks to facilitate designing and manufacturing of aircraft in India has received assent from President Droupadi Murmu. Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak was cleared by the Parliament this month. An Act to provide for regulation and control of the design, manufacture, maintenance, possession, use, operation, sale, export and import of aircraft and for matters therewith or incidental thereto."

Over 1,300 posts vacant in IAS, 586 in IPS

There are 1,316 and 586 vacant posts of Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Thursday. Of the total sanctioned strength of 6,858 IAS, there were 5,542 officers in-position, as on 1 January, 2024, he said in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha. Of the 1,316 vacant posts of IAS, 794 were meant for direct recruit.

BJP's ministerial list ready: Fadnavis

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has shortlisted potential ministers for his cabinet, with the final selections pending approval from the party's central leadership. Fadnavis made the remark during a two-day visit to Delhi, where he held discussions with senior party figures including Union Home Minister Amit Shah, BJP president JP Nadda, and senior leader BL Santosh.

While the precise date for the cabinet expansion remains undecided, Fadnavis indicated that a formula has been established, promising further details will be revealed shortly. In a separate statement, Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Ajit Pawar speculated that cabinet expansion could occur as soon as 14 December.

Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis and Prime Minister Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

The BJP-led Mahayuti coalition secured a decisive victory in last month's Maharashtra Assembly elections, winning 230 seats, while the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) managed just 46 seats in the 288-member Assembly. Alongside Fadnavis, Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar were sworn in as deputy chief ministers in a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and numerous leaders from various sectors.

Fadnavis dismissed reports of discord within the ruling alliance regarding power-sharing agreements, stating there were no issues hindering cabinet expansion. He clarified that Shinde and Pawar would individually decide on their respective ministers, emphasising that his discussions in Delhi were focused on identifying candidates from the BJP. —*PTI*

BJP FUMES

Rahul visits Hathras rape victim's kin

HATHRAS, 12 DEC

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Thursday met the family of a Dalit woman in Hathras who died allegedly after being gang-raped in September 2020.

The Congress MP reached Bool Garhi village around 11.15 am, even as police stepped up deployment in and around the hamlet in the Chandpa area of the district in light of his visit.

Gandhi spent around 35 minutes with the family at their home and interacted with them. He left without speaking to a group of reporters who had gathered in the village to cover his visit. After Gandhi left, Congress' former Hathras chief Chandragupta Vikramaditya said, "Rahul Gandhi has a relation with this family. He has always stood with them and will continue to do so."

Rahul Gandhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Last month, Gandhi tried to visit violence-hit Sambhal district to meet the victim families but was stopped by the state government citing prohibition on the entry of outsiders, including public representatives, till 10 December for law and order reasons.

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, however, criticised Gandhi for the visit, saying he is not aware of the status of the case. "The CBI has already conducted an inquiry into this case. Under the BJP rule, no culprit is allowed to get away scot free," he said. "Whether Sambhal or Hathras, he (Gandhi) keeps visiting just to be in limelight." —*PTI*

'BANANA REPUBLIC'

Oppn slams Assam govt over NRC-Aadhaar link

GUWAHATI, 12 DEC

Opposition Congress and Trinamool Congress on Thursday criticised the Assam government's decision to make NRC application a pre-condition for obtaining an Aadhaar card, stating the state has turned "banana republic" under CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and BJP.

In an effort to link the Aadhaar card with the National Register of Citizens (NRC), the Assam government on Wednesday decided that all applications for the unique identity card will be rejected if the applicant or their family had not applied for the NRC.

The decision was taken in view of infiltration attempts by citizens of trouble-hit Bangladesh, Sarma said.

TMC Rajya Sabha MP Sushmita Dev, who hails from Assam, said the NRC has not been notified by the Registrar General of India to date, and questioned making it the basis.

"Secondly, even non-citizens in India get AADHAR cards if they have stayed 182 days in the 12 months before applying. Lastly, unless the government declares a person an illegal migrant, how can they refuse AADHAR? Assam is a banana republic under @himantabiswa & @BJP4India," she posted on X. —*PTI*

Assam government under CM Himanta Sarma, decided that all applications for Aadhaar will be rejected if they had not applied for NRC **PHOTO: PTI**

Need time for lasting calm in Manipur: CM

IMPHAL, 12 DEC

Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Thursday said the Centre and the state governments are making all efforts to bring a permanent solution to the ongoing crisis in the state, but it could take time because of the fragile nature of the situation.

Speaking at a programme to commemorate Nupi Lan, Singh said, "The state and Central governments have been putting all efforts to bring a permanent solution. However, bringing a solution would take time as the situation had become chronic and fragile."

Regarding the re-imposition of Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in six police station areas, Biren said, "The state government had requested the Centre to review and withdraw AFSPA from the said police stations" and sought cooperation and support from the public in the government's effort to restore peace in the state.

"We should also remember the bravery and courage shown by Manipuri women in other instances, including ousting the Burmese during the Seven-Year Devastation period (1819–1826)," Singh said, adding that the same could also be seen among the present-day women of the state. —*PTI*

Mere harassment no proof of suicide abetment: SC

Judgment's relevance increases after suicide of Bengaluru techie Atul Subhash

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Mere harassment is not sufficient to hold someone guilty of the offence of abetting suicide, and there must be clear evidence of direct or indirect incitement, the Supreme Court has said.

The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and PB Varale while delivering a verdict on an appeal challenging a Gujarat High Court order refusing to discharge a woman's husband and her in-laws for allegedly harassing her and driving her to suicide.

The observations in the judgement gain significance in the wake of the recent suicidal death case of 34-year-old techie Atul Subhash. He alleged harassment at the hands of his estranged wife and her family.

The bench said the element of mens' mental state cannot simply be presumed and it must be evident and explicitly discernible **PHOTO: ANI**

A case of abetment of suicide was registered against his wife Nikita Singhania, her mother Nisha, father Anurag and uncle Sushil.

The top court's observations may come to the aide of Nisha and her family members.

It said the prosecution must demonstrate an active or direct action by the accused that led the deceased to take his or her own life.

- The observations came from a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and PB Varale while delivering a verdict order refusing to discharge a woman's husband, her in-laws for driving her to suicide

The bench said the element of mens rea cannot simply be presumed or inferred and it must be evident and explicitly discernible.

The bench noted the woman got married in 2009 and for the first five years of the wedlock, no child was born to the couple due to which she was allegedly subjected to physical and mental harassment.

The bench said to bring a conviction under Section 306 of the IPC, it was necessary to establish a clear mens rea to instigate or push the deceased to commit suicide.

The top court said in cases of alleged abetment of suicide, there must be concrete proof of either direct or indirect acts of incitement that led to the suicide.

"Mere allegations of harassment are insufficient to establish guilt. For a conviction, there must be evidence of a positive act by the accused, closely linked to the time of the incident, that compelled or drove the victim to commit suicide," it said. *—PTI*

'ED cannot dictate public prosecutors'

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Supreme Court has said the Enforcement Directorate and its director may provide instructions related to the facts of a money laundering case but they cannot direct their prosecutors on how to conduct themselves in court.

The top court ruling underscored the independence of public prosecutors as officers of the court and limits the influence of investigative agencies in judicial proceedings. It clarified the limits of the ED's authority over public prosecutors while addressing a trial court's directive. *—PTI*

Soldier shoots himself dead in J&K's Rajouri

JAMMU, 12 DEC

In an apparent case of suicide, an Army personnel allegedly shot himself dead using his service rifle in the Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Havaldar Indesh Kumar was on sentry duty inside his camp at the Anjanwali village in the Manjakote area when he fatally shot himself late Tuesday, the officials said. They said the reason behind the extreme step was not known immediately. Police have started inquest proceedings into the case, the officials added. *—PTI*

Odisha: Pregnant woman shot dead by miscreants

BHUBANESWAR, 12 DEC

A pregnant woman was shot dead by two unidentified persons in Odisha's Sundargarh district, police said. The deceased was identified as Soumyamayee Behera, wife of Deben Behera of Jhirdapali village under Tikayatpali police station in the district. She was seven months pregnant, they added. According to preliminary investigation, two unidentified persons knocked on Soumyamayee's door late on Tuesday night. When she opened the door, they snatched her gold ornaments and shot her when she raised an alarm, a police officer said. A forensic team and dog squad have been sent to the crime spot, and further investigation is ongoing to nab the accused, the police officer said. *—PTI*

No alcohol songs: C'garh's rule for Diljit's concert

CHANDIGARH, 12 DEC

Chandigarh Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CCPCR) has advised singer-actor Diljit Dosanjh, set to perform here on Saturday, to refrain from singing alcohol-themed songs during his live show, citing their adverse impact on children of impressionable age. The advisory issued by the CCPCR chairperson Shipra Bansal on Thursday, specifically mentioned songs like 'Patiala Peg', '5 Tara', and 'Case' etc, cautioning against even altered versions that promote alcohol, drugs or violence. "Avoid performing the songs i.e. Patiala Peg, 5 Tara, Case etc, even with twisted words in which alcohol, drugs and violence are promoted. These songs affect the children of impressionable age," the advisory read. This follows a similar directive issued last month by the Telangana government during Dosanjh's live show in Hyderabad, where he was advised against promoting alcohol and drugs. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

5-yr-old boy who fell into borewell dies in Rajasthan

JAIPUR, 12 DEC

Five-year-old Aryan, who fell into a 150-foot-deep borewell in Rajasthan's Dausa, lost the battle for life. He was taken out of the borewell last night after more than 55-hour-long rescue operation and was rushed to a hospital in an ambulance in an unconscious state, where doctors declared him dead. The incident occurred in the Kalikhad village at around 3 pm on Monday and the rescue operation began an hour later. Aryan was playing at a farm and accidentally fell into the borewell in front of her mother. As soon as the rescue team reached there, oxygen supply was started through a pipe and a camera was placed to capture his movement. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel said there were myriad challenges in the operation - the water level in the area was around 160 feet, capturing any movement of the child on camera was difficult, and there were safety concerns for the staff as well. *—PTI*

DESECRATION OF CONSTITUTION

Parbhani violence: Prohibitory orders remain, 50 detained

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 12 DEC

An uneasy calm prevailed in Parbhani on Thursday with police detaining around 50 people for the violent protests that rocked the central Maharashtra city over vandalising of a replica of the Constitution.

Some 20 vehicles were damaged during Wednesday's protests, police said.

The situation was under control, Parbhani collector Raghunath Gawade told PTI Videos.

Six teams have been formed to prepare `panchnamas' (inspection reports) of the damage to private property, he said, adding that police were investigating if there was any political motive behind the violence.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Thursday said the government promptly made an arrest and the accused, who allegedly damaged the replica, was a mentally unstable man. *—PTI*

Some 20 vehicles were damaged during Wednesday's protests **PHOTO: PTI**

Sambhal violence: FIR against local Turks

A case registered against some Turk community members related to 24 November violence at Shahi Jama Masjid in Sambhal, which claimed four lives and injured several others, has been transferred from Moradabad to Sambhal, police said on Thursday. Sambhal Kotwali Station House Officer (SHO) Anuj Kumar Tomar said, "Case was filed by Naseem, son of Shareef, at Moradabad's Pakbara station and was transferred to Sambhal. *—PTI*

Rains lash TN; schools closed in many districts

CHENNAI, 12 DEC

Widespread rains lashed parts of Tamil Nadu on Thursday, prompting authorities to declare a holiday for schools in Chennai and many other districts.

With the water-level fast rising in the reservoirs in the state, the Public Works Department officials opened the shutters of two dams in Chennai suburbs and another in Thiruvannamalai district.

About 13,000 cusecs water was released from Sathanur dam in Thiruvannamalai, while 3,500 cusecs water from Chembarambakkam dam, and another 1,000 cusecs water was discharged from the Poondi reservoir, as the level of water in these dams dangerously inched towards the full reservoir capacity levels.

Following the heavy rainfall warning issued by the IMD, six NDRF teams have been alerted to swing into rescue and relief activity in case of emergency, the government said. It also urged the people in the low-lying areas in the state to remain vigilant and take appropriate action.

Following the heavy rainfall warning issued by the IMD, six NDRF teams have been alerted to swing into rescue operations **PHOTO: PTI**

Overnight rains lashed Chennai and the neighbouring Tiruvallur, Chengelpet and Kancheepuram, besides Villupuram and some areas in the Cauvery delta region.

Following sharp showers, authorities declared a day's holiday for schools in districts, including Chennai, Tiruvallur, Chengelpet, Kancheepuram, Villupuram, Ramanathapuram, Thanjavur, Mayiladuthurai.

IMD sounds orange alert in four Kerala districts

Several parts of Kerala are expected to receive heavy rainfall on Thursday with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issuing an orange alert in four districts of the state for the day.

The IMD sounded the orange alert in Kollam, Ernakulam, Idukki and Thrissur districts. *—PTI*

Lawyer Vrinda steps down from RG Kar case

KOLKATA, 12 DEC

Senior lawyer Vrinda Grover will no longer be representing the RG Kar Medical College rape-murder victim's family, sources said on Thursday.

The chamber of Grover said in a statement that the concerned trial court, before which the trial in the rape-murder case is being held, has been informed accordingly and that the counsels stand discharged from the matter.

It said that at this stage, on account of "certain intervening factors and circumstances", senior lawyer Vrinda Grover is "constrained to withdraw from the case proceedings in this matter" and will no longer be representing the victim's family.

The chamber of advocate Grover, including advocates Soutik Banerjee and Arjun Gooptu, had been requested by the victim's parents to provide legal representation before the Supreme Court, Calcutta High Court and the Sealdah sessions court and ACJM court, the sources said.

Grover's chamber provided legal services and representation pro bono (free of cost) to the victim's family before all courts from September 2024, they said.

PHOTO: X

It said that during this period, the evidence of 43 prosecution witnesses has been recorded, and "bail of other accused persons consistently and successfully opposed.

The body of the on-duty post-graduate trainee doctor was found in the seminar room of RG Kar Medical College and Hospital on 9 August. Post mortem of the body revealed that she was raped and brutally murdered. *—PTI*

Delhi HC junks PIL on sexual harassment in film industry

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to examine a PIL raising allegations of sexual harassment in the "Indian film industry".

A bench of Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela said that in the absence of a complaint by an aggrieved party, it couldn't order a "roving and fishing" inquiry.

The petitioner, who relied on the Justice Hema Committee report on sexual exploitation in the Malayalam film industry, sought a direction to the National Commission for Women to inquire into the alleged violation of fundamental and human rights in the Indian film industry as well.

"We will examine when there is a complaint. Your petition is structured on the report of Justice Hema Committee which is being looked into by another court," the bench said, adding, "We will not direct any roving and fishing inquiry."

PHOTO: PTI

The petitioner, Ajeesh Kalathil Gopi, alleged that sexual harassment was present in the "entire film industry" and said he has even made complaint to relevant authorities in this regard. He also sought the report of the committee to be produced verbatim to ensure transparency.

The court, however, said the complaint should come from a survivor and noted the "entire petition was based on surmises without any empirical data". It said Justice Hema Committee was constituted after complaints were made by aggrieved parties. *—PTI*

Keeping child away from mother is cruelty, says HC

MUMBAI, 12 DEC

The Bombay High Court has held that not letting a child meet her mother amounts to "cruelty" under the Indian Penal Code, and refused to quash an FIT filed by a Jalna-based woman against her in-laws.

A bench of Justices Vibha Kankanwadi and Rohit Joshi at Aurangabad noted in its 11 December order that the woman's daughter, only four years old, is being kept away from her despite a lower court's order.

"Keeping a young child of four years away from her mother also amounts to mental harassment, amounting to cruelty in as much as it would certainly cause grave injury to the mental health of the mother," the HC said. *—PTI*

Bishnoi's aide responsible for Gurugram blast

GURUGRAM, 12 DEC

Gangster Rohit Godara, an associate of Goldy Brar and the Lawrence Bishnoi, has claimed responsibility for the crude bomb blast outside a club in Sector 29 here earlier this week.

In a purported social media post, Godara said, "I, Rohit Godara, Bikaner, Goldy Brar, have caused the bomb blasts outside two clubs in Chandigarh and in Sector 29 of Gurugram two days ago." "Gambling bookies, hawala traders and dance clubs who are earning crores of rupees daily will all have to pay tax. This is just a small demo to open your ears. We can create an even bigger explosion which will disintegrate such dance clubs."

He threatened the operators: "Don't take this as our warning, we do what we say. Those who suck the blood of the poor and those who earn crores of rupees, will have to pay." *—PTI*

HE MISLED PROBE

UP scientist's minor son kills mom

GORAKHPUR, 12 DEC

A scientist's minor son has allegedly confessed to killing his mother at their home in Gorakhpur, days after he misled his father and police, claiming she died of an accidental fall, officials said.

Aarti Verma died after her son, a class 11 student, pushed her and her head crashed against a wall on 3 December, police said.

Superintendent of Police (North) Jitendra Kumar Srivastava said, "After two hours of questioning, the teenager admitted that he pushed his mother during an argument, leading to a fatal head injury."

When Aarti's husband Ram Milan, an assistant scientist at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Chennai, found her phone switched off for two days, he sent his sister-in-law on 7 December to check the house.

PHOTO: X

The house was found locked from outside. On returning to Gorakhpur the following evening, Milan found his wife's body on the floor, police said.

Investigators found bloodstains at two different spots, indicating that the body was dragged. CCTV footage also confirmed that no outsider had entered the house, police said.

Police allegedly recovered a large amount of cash from the boy's room. "During interrogation, the boy confessed on Tuesday evening that on the morning of 3 December, his mother asked him to go to school. When he refused, a dispute over money ensued, and his mother threw cash at him in frustration," Srivastava said. *—PTI*

MP owner bites 'Pushpa 2' viewer's ear over food bill

GWALIOR, 12 DEC

A canteen owner at a theatre screening the movie "Pushpa 2: The Rule" in Madhya Pradesh's Gwalior allegedly bit the ear of a man over a dispute on settling the snacks bill, police said.

The incident took place on Sunday when the victim, Shabbir, went to the canteen of Kailash Talkies in Inderganj area during the movie interval to buy food, the police said on Wednesday.

An argument broke out between Shabbir and canteen owner Raju, who accused the former of not paying money, an official said.

The heated exchange escalated into a fight with Raju and his three associates thrashing Shabbir. Raju allegedly bit one of the ears of Shabbir, as per the FIR. *—PTI*

Kerala HC criticises Dileep's Sabarimala VIP darshan

KOCHI, 12 DEC

Kerala High Court on Thursday termed as "very very serious" the "VIP darshan" provided to actor Dileep at the Lord Ayyappa shrine in Sabarimala recently and said that it resulted in pilgrims being "virtually blocked" from getting darshan of the deity for several minutes.

A bench of Justices Anil K Narendra and Muralee Krishna S said it was "not a question of two minutes" when the first two rows in front of the 'Sopanam' were "choked" for several minutes to allow the actor to get darshan.

"What is the privilege such persons are having?" the court asked and directed the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) and the Chief Police Coordinator to ensure such things do not happen in future.

PHOTO: X

The observations and direction of the bench came after perusing the CCTV footageand the video was also shown in the open court.

"It is evident from the video, that movement of pilgrims in the first row from the northern side was blocked by another Devaswom guard by 10.51 pm," the court noted.

The TDB told the bench that it had already issued a show cause notice to the officers, including the two guards, responsible for regulating the movement of the pilgrims in front of Sopanam. *—PTI*

SANTA CLAUS IS IN TOWN

A vendor displays miniatures of Santa Claus ahead of Christmas celebrations, in Nadia, West Bengal, on Thursday
PHOTO: PTI

Migrant workers flee Lebanon after abuse & war

Isatta Bah wakes up from a nap in a crowded shelter on the outskirts of Beirut, clutching her baby, Blessing.

The 24-year-old from Sierra Leone spends her days waiting for an exit visa that could put her and her 1-year-old on a plane back to the West African nation. She wants to reunite with her family after what she called exploitative work conditions and sexual violence, along with the recent horrors of war in Lebanon.

"My experience in Lebanon is not good for me. I am really tired," Bah said. "I want to go home."

Hundreds of migrant workers in Lebanon are waiting to be repatriated after the ceasefire ending the 14-month war between the Lebanon-based Hezbollah and Israel went into effect last month.

Lebanon has long drawn migrant workers dreaming of building better lives for their families. Enticed by promises of stable jobs and decent pay, they enter Lebanon via recruitment agencies under a sponsorship-based labour system known as Kafala — only to find themselves often trapped with confiscated passports, long hours, withheld wages and, for many, abuse.

The Kafala system has long been criticised by human rights groups, but the government rarely if ever addresses the criticism. But Bah knew little of that when she came to Lebanon in 2022. She was promised a job at a supermarket with a USD200 monthly salary, she said. Instead, she was sent to care for an older woman once she arrived.

Within a month of her arrival, her 3-year-old son back home fell ill and died. She said she was not given the time to grieve and fled her employer's house. Since her employer held her passport and other documents, Bah said she had to leave them behind.

Her experience in Lebanon then took a darker turn. One day she and five housemates were picked up by a taxi driver who said he would take them home. Instead, she said, the driver dropped them at the wrong spot. As they tried and failed to find another cab, a group of men chased them and raped them. "Men were coming and they were cheering for us," said Bah, who gave her consent to be named. "They beat us and they had sex with us." She said it took her about two weeks to recover and resume work at two hotels. Without documents, migrants can hesitate to go to police. Two months later, she and another friend found out they were pregnant. With war, their lives became more precarious. When Israel intensified its bombardment of Beirut's southern suburbs in September, Bah fled the area with her baby and friends on foot. Not every migrant worker escaped the attacks. An estimated 37 have been killed and 150 wounded since October 2023, said Joelle Mhanna with the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). To house over 200 women from Sierra Leone including Bah, they repurposed an abandoned space owned by her family — a former car dealership that was later a venue for pop-up events and named The Shelter. While some migrants have been accepted at government-run shelters, there were regular reports of others being evicted or denied access, the IOM said.

Enticed by promises of stable jobs and decent pay, people enter Lebanon only to find themselves often trapped with confiscated passports, long hours, withheld wages and, for many, abuse ***PHOTO: PTI***

Some migrants hesitate to approach the government shelters for fear of detention or deportation, Mhanna said. "As a result, most are being hosted by embassies, NGOs and community-based organizations including churches, monasteries and other religious groups."

IOM said it has received requests from around 10,000 migrants seeking to be repatriated, a small fraction of the over 175,000 in Lebanon.

As of 26 November, the IOM had supported over 400 migrants to return home. That included two charter flights for people from Bangladesh and Sierra Leone. It wasn't clear how many more flights are planned. or to where.

Laughter and cheer filled Beirut-Rafic Hariri International Airport on 19 November. The women from Sierra Leone arrived in groups, dragging suitcases and sharing hugs. Some danced in celebration for their long-awaited flight. "It wasn't easy," said Amanata Thullah after four years. "I am happy to be going back to my country." Bah was not among those leaving, but she said she and others at the shelter were happy to see friends return home.

She now awaits her turn, along with over 50 others.

"I wish to go back home to continue my education," Bah said. "Since I was little, I always wanted to be a computer science student, because I'm good at that." *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR ساہ

Legal experts call for gender neutral legislation

Legal experts on Wednesday flagged the "gross misuse" of laws related to domestic violence and dowry harassment, while calling for a "correct filtration mechanism", new gender neutral legislations and sensitising the police to curb filing of false cases.

The experts were speaking in the aftermath of the alleged suicide by 34-year-old techie, Atul Subhash, leaving behind a 24-page purported death note, giving extensive details of what he alleged was years-long emotional distress of marital issues; multiple cases filed against him and harassment by his wife, her relatives, and a judge based in Uttar Pradesh.

Senior advocate Vikas Pahwa termed the issue as "very serious" requiring a fitting solution.

"For many years I have seen how the provision has been grossly being misused by many people. It's a very serious matter and we have to find a solution. My own personal view is that make this section bailable. Also, if there is false complaint is filed, action should be taken against the erring complainant. Also false cases of outraging the modesty being filed against in-laws. We see it every day. Courts should start taking these issues very seriously. Police should be sensitised. They should not facilitate filing such false cases," said Pahwa.

Supreme Court advocate Ashwani Dubey said there was a need for gender neutral laws.

"The whole premise of Section 498A is to protect women from being exploited, harassed, or abused physically or mentally. However, there are several instances where this regulation has become a scourge for men in society. The time has come for gender neutral laws. Also, courts must exercise caution in dowry harassment cases to prevent misuse of law and avoid unnecessary trouble to innocent family members," he said

According to experts, problem was not with the women protection laws, but their misuse ***PHOTO: LINKEDIN***

> Advocate Samvedna Verma said the legislative intent behind women friendly laws was to safeguard the rights of women who are considered to be the vulnerable section of the society

Advocate Samvedna Verma, who has handled several domestic violence and dowry-related cases, said the legislative intent behind women friendly laws was to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of women "who are considered to be the vulnerable section of the society".

"The purpose of these laws is to protect women from the atrocities caused due to family discord, domestic violence and financial hardships. However, it cannot be refuted that some women are misusing these laws to harass men and their family members to gain leverage in divorce proceedings, extort money and settle scores with them," Verma said.

She said the problem was not with the women protection laws, but their misuse, which can be prevented by a correct filtration mechanism in place in our legal and administrative environment.

"Before beginning a trial or investigation the veracity of the allegations must be verified," she said. *—PTI*

The experts have said that the courts must exercise caution in dowry harassment cases to prevent misuse of law and avoid unnecessary trouble to innocent family members ***PHOTO: LINKEDIN***

Artificial solar eclipse: Why are satellites trying to block the sun?

When you see a solar eclipse, you often think of the moon passing between the Earth and the sun, then temporarily blocking the sun's light from reaching Earth. This alignment is known as syzygy (sounds like siz-uh-jee).

However, last week, the European Space Agency (ESA) launched two spacecraft that will aim to mimic the behaviour of the moon by creating an artificial solar eclipse for the first time ever. The idea? To demonstrate the readiness of a technology called precise formation flying (PFF) and to study the sun's atmosphere, known as the corona. The mission is called Proba-3 (Project for On-Board Autonomy).

"Right now this (the corona) is a region of the sun that has been poorly investigated, and scientists nowadays don't really understand some of the phenomenon that's happening there," Ester Bastida, Proba-3 systems engineer, said in a recent ESA video. Among the key questions about the corona that scientists want to understand is why it's significantly hotter than the sun itself.

While the surface of the sun is at roughly 5,500 degrees Celsius (9,932 degrees Fahrenheit), the corona — the wispy outer atmosphere of the sun — can reach temperatures of 1-3 million degrees Celsius (1.8-5.4 million degrees Fahrenheit).

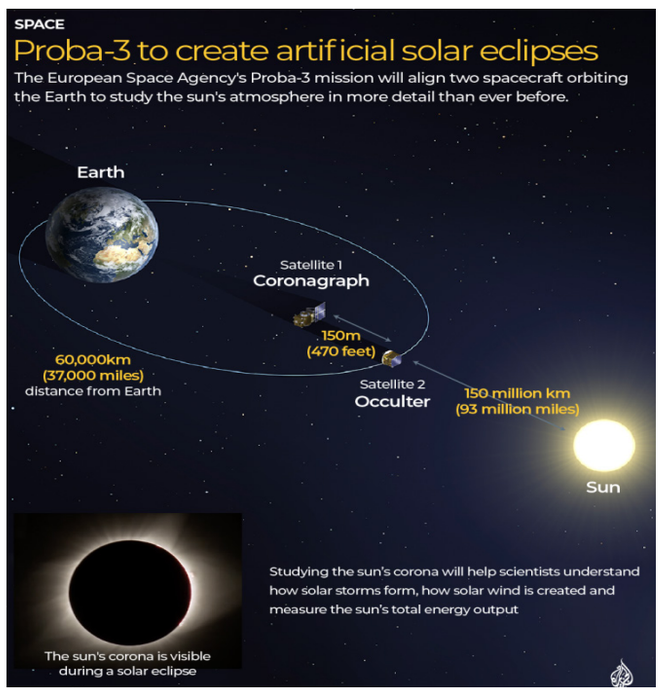
Although the circumference of the sun is roughly 4,373,000 kilometres (2,717,000 miles), solar flares from the corona can reach Earth, almost 150 million kilometres (93 million miles) away.

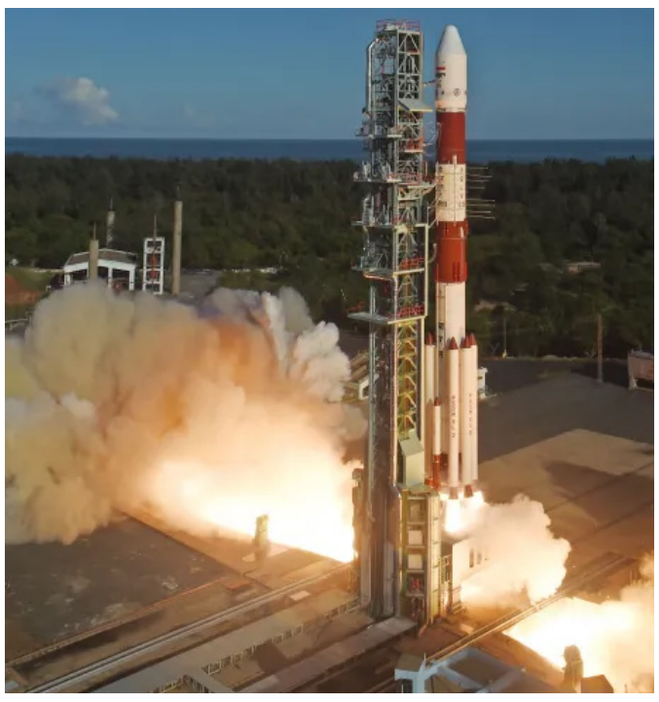
How does the Proba-3 create an eclipse?

The Proba-3 launched on December 5 at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in India, one of the world's most-used space launch facilities.

The two spacecraft satellites will be carried into space roughly 60,000km above Earth using the PSLV-C59 rocket, built by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The Coronagraph Spacecraft (CSC) is responsible for guiding the Occulter (OSC), the second spacecraft that has a disk with a diameter of 140cm (55 inches), which will cast a controlled shadow onto the Coronagraph spacecraft.

According to the ESA, the two spacecraft will use precise formation flying (PFF) technology to position themselves exactly 150 metres apart, lining up with the sun "so that one spacecraft blocks out the brilliant solar disk for the other".


SPACE
Proba-3 to create artificial solar eclipses
The European Space Agency's Proba-3 mission will align two spacecraft orbiting the Earth to study the sun's atmosphere in more detail than ever before.
Earth
Satellite 1
Coronagraph
150m
(470 feet)
60,000km
(37,000 miles)
distance from Earth
Satellite 2
Occulter
150 million km
(93 million miles)
Sun
The sun's corona is visible during a solar eclipse
Studying the sun's corona will help scientists understand how solar storms form, how solar wind is created and measure the sun's total energy output



Proba-3 was launched on 5 December at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, one of the world's most-used space launch facilities ***PHOTOS: PTI/ISRO***

The solar eclipse manoeuvre will need to have millimetre-level accuracy to succeed, creating a solar eclipse on demand for up to six hours so researchers can study the solar corona.

What are researchers hoping to accomplish during this mission?

One of the goals is to demonstrate the PFF technology, which uses GPS and inter-satellite radio links for initial positioning, while maintaining a precise distance between both the Coronagraph spacecraft and the Occulter spacecraft.

Initially, the two satellite spacecraft remain connected. But once separated, they can maintain formation — they will then be 25-250m (82-820 feet) apart.

The second goal is to use the built-in equipment that will observe the corona to understand why the corona is hotter than the sun.

One of the instruments on board is a coronagraph — a telescopic device that helps block out light from a star or other very bright object so other things can be seen. The Proba-3 coronagraph has a long-winded name: Association of Spacecraft for Polarimetric and Imaging Investigation of the Corona of the Sun (ASPICCS).

Why is this such a big deal?

The corona typically remains invisible due to its extremely low brightness, appearing a million times lighter than the sun's bright surface. It only becomes visible to the naked eye during solar eclipses, when the moon blocks the sun's intense light.

"By studying the sun corona, we can better predict space weather and extreme geomagnetic storms, which can cause major disruptions to satellites and systems on Earth," the ESA said in a recent video on the mission.

Total solar eclipses are very rare — any spot on the Earth typically sees one only every 375 years, and they only last a few minutes.

If Proba-3, which has a 19-hour and 36-minute orbit, succeeds in its mission, scientists won't need to wait.

They will be able to study the corona for six hours in every orbital cycle of the mission. *—Al Jazeera*

UN demands 'immediate' ceasefire in Gaza

Israeli airstrikes kill 28 in Gaza, including 7 children and one woman after UN's ceasefire demand

BRISSELS, 12 DEC

The United Nations General Assembly has voted overwhelmingly to demand an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and expressed support for the work of the UN's agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA).

The assembly on Wednesday passed a resolution demanding an immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire in Gaza, which was adopted with 158 votes in favour from the 193-member assembly and nine votes against with 13 abstentions.

A second resolution expressing support for UNRWA and deploring a new Israeli law that would ban the UN agency's operations in Israel was carried with 159 votes in favour, nine against and 11 abstentions.

That resolution demands that Israel respect UNRWA's mandate and calls on the Israeli government "to abide by its international obligations, respect the privileges and immunities of UNRWA and uphold its responsibility to allow and facilitate full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian assistance in all its forms into and throughout the entire Gaza Strip".

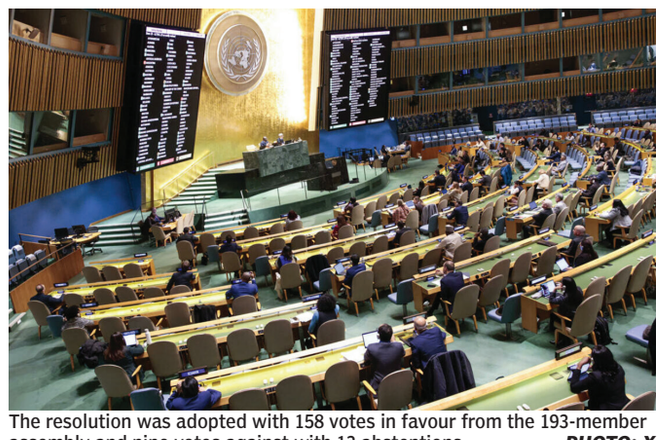
Both votes culminated two days of speeches at the UN where speaker after speaker called for an end to Israel's 14-month war on the Palestinian territory that has killed at least 44,805 people – mostly Palestinian women and children – and wounded 106,257.

"Gaza doesn't exist anymore," Slovenia's UN Ambassador Samuel Zbogar told the General Assembly meeting. "It is destroyed. Civilians are facing hunger, despair and death," he said. Al Jazeera

Palestinian medical officials say Israeli airstrikes have killed at least 28 people in the Gaza Strip, including seven children and a woman, hours after the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly approved a resolution demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

One of the strikes overnight and into Thursday flattened a house in the built-up Nuseirat refugee camp, according to the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby city of Deir al-Balah, where the casualties were taken.

Two other strikes killed 15 men who were part of local committees established to secure aid convoys. —*PTI*



The resolution was adopted with 158 votes in favour from the 193-member assembly and nine votes against with 13 abstentions **PHOTO: X**

CIA analyst accused of Israel-Iran leak to remain in jail

ALEXANDRIA, 12 DEC

A CIA analyst charged with leaking top-secret details ahead of a planned Israeli attack on Iran earlier this year will remain jailed pending trial, a judge said. The ruling by US District Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles overrules a magistrate who that Asif Rahman, 34, of Virginia, could be free on restrictions while he awaits trial on charges of disclosing national defence information. The fight over Rahman's detention revealed additional details about the government's investigation of the leak and the analyst who allegedly disclosed the classified documents in October on the Telegram. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

NZ overturns visa denial for Candace Owens

WELLINGTON, 12 DEC

A New Zealand immigration official has overturned a ban on US conservative commentator Candace Owens, citing the "importance of free speech." Owens plans to speak at events in Auckland and several Australian cities in February and March. In October, Australia's Immigration Minister Tony Burke denied her entry, highlighting her controversial remarks regarding Nazi medical experimentation on Jews during World War II. Owens, who has over 3 million YouTube followers, has faced accusations of promoting conspiracy theories and antisemitism while opposing movements like Black Lives Matter. New Zealand initially refused her entertainer's work permit in November due to her exclusion from Australia. However, Associate Immigration Minister Chris Penk granted her a visa after considering the appeal. —*PTI*

Hong Kong ex-lawmaker convicted for rioting

HONG KONG, 12 DEC

A Hong Kong judge on Thursday convicted a pro-democracy former lawmaker of rioting during mob violence at a subway station at the height of the city's anti-government protests in July 2019. Prosecutors accused Lam Cheuk-ting of provoking a group of about 100 men armed with wooden poles and metal rods who attacked protesters and bystanders at a train station. The men, all clad in white shirts, in contrast with the black worn by protesters, claimed to be protecting their homeland in Yuen Long, a residential district in Hong Kong's New Territories. Dozens of people, including Lam, were injured in the violence, a key chapter that escalated the protest movement as the public criticised police for their delayed response. —*PTI*

Politico names Meloni Europe's powerful leader

ROME, 12 DEC

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has been named the most powerful person in Europe for 2024 by Politico, reflecting her growing influence. Leading the right-wing Brothers of Italy party, Meloni has transformed her image from ultranationalist to a respected leader recognized by both Brussels and Washington. Her leadership, balancing nationalist principles with pragmatic governance, has resulted in one of Italy's most stable governments in recent history. Policies on migration and LGBTQ+ rights, once controversial, now garner cautious approval within the EU. Meloni's rise also marks a broader European trend of right-wing populism challenging centrist politics. She has steered her party towards the centre, cementing her status as a formidable political force. —*Agencies*

Ukrainian troops repelled nearly 40 Russian attempts to storm defences around Pokrovsk over the previous 24 hours **PHOTO: PTI**

Russia edges closer to key Ukraine city

KYIV, 12 DEC

Fighting around the key eastern Ukraine city of Pokrovsk is "extremely intense" after a monthslong Russian push, Ukraine's top military commander said, with analysts estimating Russian forces are now within just a few kilometres of the city.

Ukrainian troops repelled nearly 40 Russian attempts to storm defences around Pokrovsk over the previous 24 hours, the General Staff said in a battlefield report on Thursday. "Russian occupiers are throwing all available forces forward, attempting to break through the defences of our troops," Ukrainian army chief Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi said in a Facebook post late Wednesday. His forces are outnumbered, he said.

Ukraine's stretched defences in Donetsk have been creaking since early this year under a fierce Russian drive to capture its neighbour's entire eastern Donbas region.

Russia is trying to overwhelm Ukraine's battlefield defences with sheer numbers of troops. Pokrovsk, which had a population of about 60,000 before Russia's finvasion in February 2022, is one of Ukraine's main defensive strongholds and a key logistics hub in the Donetsk region. Its capture would compromise Ukraine's defensive abilities and supply routes and would bring Russia closer to its stated goal of seizing the entire Donetsk region. —*PTI*

Serbia's Prez says he won't flee country like Assad

BELGRADE, 12 DEC

Serbia's president accused foreign intelligence services on Tuesday of trying to unseat him in the wake of spreading protests in the Balkan state and that he wouldn't flee the country like the ousted Syrian leader Bashar Assad.

President Aleksandar Vucic posted a video message on Instagram saying: "I will fight for Serbia and serve only my Serbian people and all other citizens of Serbia, I will never serve foreigners, those who seek to defeat, humiliate, and destroy Serbia," he added.

Opponents of the populist leader compared him to Assad who fled to Moscow following a stunning rebel advance, ending his family's half-century of iron rule.

Vucic's opponents in Serbia have compared him to Assad and other world dictators, predicting that he may also try to flee the country if he loses his firm grip on power amid the protests triggered by a rail station roof collapse in the northern city of Novi Sad that killed 15 people on 1 November.

The protesters in Novi Sad, Belgrade and other Serbian cities have blaming the deadly collapse on rampant corruption in the country that led to sloppy renovation work on the station building in Novi Sad — part of a wider deal with Chinese state companies involved in a number of infrastructure projects in the Balkan country. —*PTI*

Aleksandar Vucic **PHOTO: X**

Indian student killed in UK road accident

LONDON, 12 DEC

A 32-year-old Indian student, Chiranjeevi Panguluri, has tragically died in a road accident in Leicestershire, eastern England, while four other passengers suffered serious injuries. The incident occurred on Tuesday morning, when the grey Mazda 3 Tamura, in which Panguluri was a passenger, veered off the A6 road and landed in a ditch.

Emergency services pronounced Panguluri dead at the scene. The driver and three other passengers—one woman and two men—were taken to hospital, with two of the male passengers reported to have serious, but non-life-threatening injuries.

A 27-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of causing death by dangerous driving but has since been released on bail.

All those involved in the crash are believed to be from Andhra Pradesh, India. —*PTI*

OVER MARTIAL LAW ROW

S Korea Oppn moves to impeach Yoon

SEOUL, 12 DEC

South Korea's parliament says the country's six opposition parties have submitted a new joint motion to impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol over his declaration of martial law.

The National Assembly said the main opposition Democratic Party and five smaller opposition parties submitted the impeachment motion on Thursday afternoon.

The parties say they aim put the motion to a floor vote on Saturday.

Yoon's short-lived 3 December martial law declaration has triggered political chaos and large protests calling for his ouster. The Democratic Party has argued that Yoon's decree amounted to rebellion.

Earlier Thursday, Yoon defended his decree as an act of governance and denied rebellion charges.

South Korea's National Assembly voted to impeach the national police chief and the justice minister over their enforcement of martial law last week.

Yoon Suk Yeol **PHOTO: PTI**

Yoon in a televised statement defended his martial law decree as an act of governance and denied rebellion charges.

In a televised speech Thursday, Yoon, a conservative, said he enacted martial law as a warning to the liberal Democratic Party. He called the party "a monster" and "anti-state forces" that he said tried to use its legislative muscle to impeach top officials, undermined the government's budget bill for next year and sympathised with North Korea. Yoon said martial law was an act of governance that cannot be the subject of investigations and doesn't amount to rebellion. He said the deployment of 300 soldiers was designed to maintain order, not dissolve. —*PTI*

IS attack: Tight security for Taliban minister's funeral

KABUL, 12 DEC

Tight security measures were in place on Thursday for a Taliban minister's funeral in Afghanistan after he was killed in a suicide bombing claimed by an affiliate of the Islamic State group.

Cabinet member Khalil Haqqani was the most high-profile casualty of an assault in the country since the Taliban seized power three years ago.

He died in a blast, Wednesday at the Ministry for Refugees and Repatriation in the capital, Kabul, along with several other victims. Officials have not given the latest toll for the dead and injured.

Haqqani is the uncle of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the acting interior minister and the leader of a powerful faction within the Taliban. The US placed a bounty on both their heads. In a statement carried by the Amaq News Agency, the IS affiliate said one of its fighters carried out the suicide bombing. The fighter waited for Haqqani to leave his office and then detonated his device, according to the statement. —*PTI*

Trump invites Xi to his inauguration: Reports

WASHINGTON DC, 12 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump has invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to his 20 January inauguration, CBS News reported, citing multiple sources. The invitation, extended shortly after the 5 November election, marks an unprecedented move, as no Chinese leader has ever attended a U.S. presidential inauguration. It remains unclear if Xi has accepted the invitation.

In a recent NBC interview, Trump described his relationship with Xi as positive, revealing they had communicated as recently as last week. Despite the outreach, Trump's administration is shaping up to be tough on China, with several China hawks, including Senator Marco Rubio as secretary of state, slated for key roles.

During his campaign, Trump vowed to impose a 10 per cent tariff on Chinese goods unless Beijing acts to curb fentanyl trafficking. He also floated tariffs exceeding 60 per cent, prompting warnings from Chinese state media about a potential tariff war between the two global powers.

US president-elect Donald Trump described his relationship with China's Xi as positive **PHOTO: X**

US hikes tariffs on Chinese imports

The Biden administration plans to raise tariffs on solar wafers, polysilicon and some tungsten products from China to protect US clean energy businesses.

US Trade Representative's office said tariffs-made solar wafers and polysilicon will rise to 50 per cent and duties on certain tungsten products will increase to 25 per cent, effective on 1 January following a review of Chinese trade practices. Last week, Washington tightened restrictions on Chinese access to advanced semiconductor technology. Beijing responded by banning exports to the US of certain critical minerals needed to make computer chips, such as gallium, germanium and antimony. It also stepped up its controls on graphite exports to the US. —*PTI*

KARI LAKE IS HEAD OF VOICE OF AMERICA

WASHINGTON DC, 12 DEC

President-elect Donald Trump said Wednesday that he's picking Kari Lake as director of Voice of America, installing a staunch loyalist who ran unsuccessfully for Arizona governor and a Senate seat to head the congressionally funded broadcaster that provides independent news reporting around the world.

Lake was a television news anchor in Phoenix for nearly three decades until she left in 2021 after making a series of controversial statements on social media, including sharing Covid-19 misinformation during the pandemic. —*PTI*

Kari Lake **PHOTO: X**

TO BOLSTER TRADITIONAL MEDIA

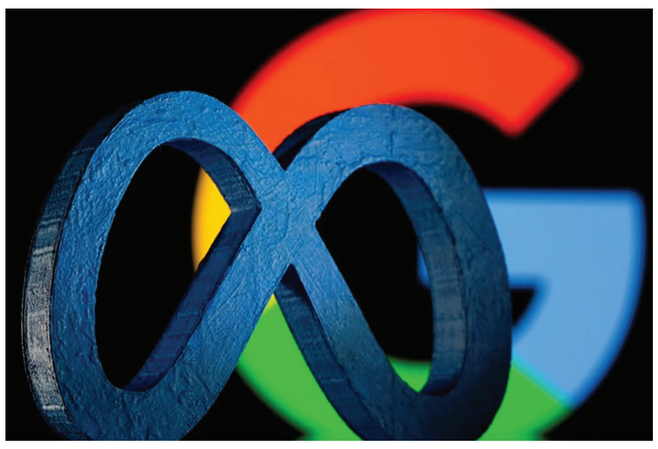
Australia to tax tech giants over content fee

AUSTRALIA, 12 DEC

Australia's government has unveiled plans to impose a tax on major tech firms if they fail to financially support local news media organisations. Effective from 1 January, 2025, this measure targets companies like Meta and Google with Australian revenues exceeding 250 million Australian dollars (£138 million) and requires them to pay for the news content driving traffic to their sites. Failure to comply will result in significant tax penalties.

Communications Minister Michelle Rowland announced the initiative, highlighting the disruption caused by digital platforms to the media landscape, which poses a threat to the sustainability of public interest journalism.

"These platforms need to support access to quality journalism that informs and strengthens our democracy," she stated during the announcement.



The primary aim is to encourage partnerships between digital platforms and news organisations **PHOTO: X**

The new regulations aim to bolster traditional media outlets facing challenges as their content is made universally accessible on online platforms, leading to a severe reduction in advertising revenue. This shift has resulted in substantial job losses among Australian journalists.

Under the new framework, parent companies of Google, Facebook, and TikTok will be affected, but the tax could be avoided if they choose to enter into commercial agreements with Australian media entities.

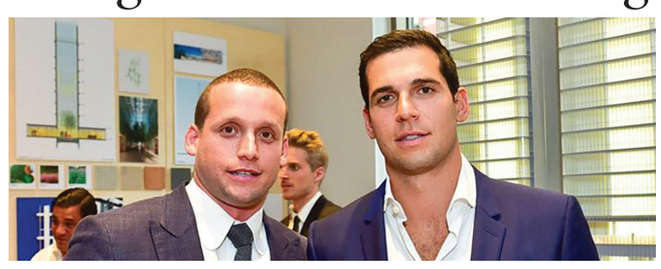
The primary goal, according to Assistant Treasurer Stephen Jones, is not to generate revenue but to encourage partnerships between digital platforms and news organisations.

Previously, in response to similar legislation in 2021, Google and Meta had negotiated deals with Australian newsrooms valued at around £80 million.

However, Meta has expressed its reluctance to renew these agreements, claiming that news constitutes a minor segment of its traffic.

This new initiative marks Australia's ongoing efforts to regulate major tech firms amidst rising concerns over online content governance. —*Al Jazeera*

Real estate tycoon brothers charged with sex trafficking



Tal Alexander and Oren Alexander are accused of identifying and luring women to events through social media **PHOTO: X**

NEW YORK, 12 DEC

Two real estate tycoons and their brother were arrested on federal sex trafficking charges, New York prosecutors announced Wednesday.

Oren and Tal Alexander are accused of using their wealth and prominent positions in real estate in ultra-luxury markets in N.Y. and Florida for over a decade to "repeatedly and violently drug, sexually assault and rape dozens of women." The two brothers and Oren Alexander's twin, Alon Alexander, have previously denied sexual assault allegations. They're each charged with one count of engaging in a sex trafficking conspiracy and one count of sex trafficking by force, fraud, or coercion. Tal Alexander faces an additional charge of sex trafficking by force, fraud, or coercion. They are accused of identifying and luring women to events through social media, dating apps, in-person encounters or via party promoters in a sex trafficking scheme. —*Axios*

PHOTO: PTI

Gold rises ₹500 per 10 gm; silver at ₹97,000 per kg

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Gold prices climbed Rs 500 to Rs 80,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday due to persistent buying by retailers and jewellers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity finished at Rs 80,400 per 10 grams in the previous trading session. The yellow metal has jumped nearly Rs 2,000 in the past three sessions. Silver also rallied Rs 700 to Rs 97,000 per kg on Thursday. The white metal settled at Rs 96,300 per kg in the previous session. The price of gold of 99.5 per cent purity also surged Rs 500 to Rs 80,500 per 10 grams. It ended at Rs 80,000 per 10 grams on Wednesday. However, silver contracts for March delivery climbed Rs 420 or 0.44 per cent to Rs 96,222 per kg. —*PTI*

Tech Mahindra, ServiceNow tie-up for gen-AI solutions

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Tech Mahindra on Thursday said it has collaborated with American software firm ServiceNow to launch the One E2E Platform, a GenAI-powered enterprise service management solution. The platform will help enhance operational efficiency and competitiveness for businesses across various industries, by integrating GenAI capabilities into their business-critical processes and modernising infrastructure to be future-ready, a company statement said. The One E2E Platform will incorporate advanced analytics, GenAI and automation to optimise network operations, facilitating business growth, it said. Shares of Tech Mahindra were trading 1.72 per cent higher at Rs 1,790.65 apiece on the BSE.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Adani Energy's arm commissions 250 MW solar project

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Adani Green Energy on Thursday said its arm has commissioned a 250 MW solar power project at Badi Sid in Jodhpur district, Rajasthan. With the commissioning of this plant, AGEL's total operational renewable generation capacity has increased to 11,434 MW, a BSE filing said. Adani Green Energy Twenty Five Ltd, a step-down subsidiary of Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) has commissioned a 250 MW solar power project at Badi Sid, in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, according to the filing. —*PTI*

Punjab & Sind Bank to raise ₹3K cr via infra bonds

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

State-owned Punjab & Sind Bank plans to raise Rs 3,000 crore from maiden infrastructure bonds this month as part of exercise to raise resources to expand loan book. "We have taken board approval for raising Rs 5,000 crore from infrastructure bonds in tranches. As against that, the bank proposes to raise Rs 3,000 crore in the first tranche," Punjab & Sind Bank Managing Director and CEO Swarup Kumar Saha said. Asked about the timing of fundraise, he said, it would be tentatively in the third week of this month. The base issue size is going to be Rs 500 crore, with a greenshoe option of Rs 2,500 crore —*PTI*

Rupee hits fresh all-time low, settles 4 paise lower

It settles at 84.87 against US dollar dragged down by negative mkt

MUMBAI, 12 DEC

The rupee depreciated by 4 paise to settle at an all-time low of 84.87 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, dragged down by negative domestic equity markets, outflow of foreign funds and rise in crude oil prices.

Forex traders said investors were awaiting cues from domestic inflation data to be released later in the day even as an elevated dollar index weighed on the Indian currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.85 and touched the lowest-ever level of 84.88 against the greenback during intraday trade. The unit finally ended the session 4 paise down at a fresh all-time low closing level of 84.87 (provisional) against the dollar.

On Wednesday, the rupee settled with a gain of 2 paise at 84.83 against the US dollar.

Rupee's previous record low closing level was recorded on December 9, when it settled 20 paise lower at 84.86 against the dollar.

Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst at Mirae Asset Sharekhan, said the rupee touched a fresh all-time low on strong US dollar and weak domestic markets.

He further said the US dollar gained on rising inflation in the US. However, it was in line with estimates.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading marginally lower by 0.16 per cent at 106.22.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.35 per cent to USD 73.78 per barrel in futures trade.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Wednesday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 1,012.24 crore, according to exchange data. —*PTI*

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 84.85 and touched the lowest-ever level of 84.88 PHOTO: PTI

SENSEX DECLINES 236.18 PTS

Mkt settles lower ahead of inflation data announcement

PHOTO: PTI

MUMBAI, 12 DEC

Equity market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Thursday due to intense selling in index majors Reliance Industries, L&T and HUL as investors turned cautious ahead of the inflation data announcement.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex declined 236.18 points or 0.29 per cent to settle at 81,289.96. During the day, it dropped 314.5 points or 0.38 per cent to 81,211.64.

The NSE Nifty dropped 93.10 points or 0.38 per cent to 24,548.70.

Among the 30-share Sensex blue-chip firms, NTPC, Hindustan Unilever, Tata Motors, Maruti, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the biggest laggards.

Bharti Airtel, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Infosys, Adani Ports and Tata Consultancy Services were among the gainers. The 30-share BSE benchmark rose by 16.09 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 81,526.14 on Wednesday. —*PTI*

Reliance Power shares surge 5%

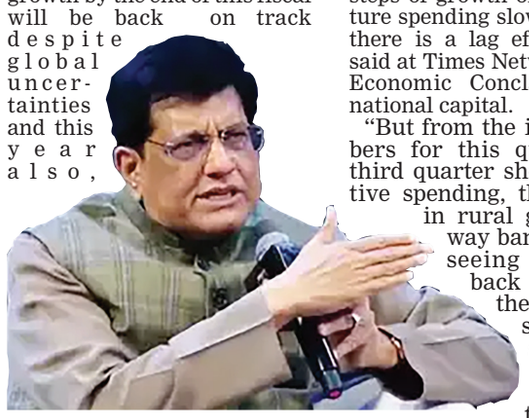
Shares of Reliance Power jumped 5 per cent on Thursday after its subsidiary Reliance NU Suntech won the country's single largest 930 MW solar project from Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). The stock climbed 4.99 per cent to Rs 46.24 on both the BSE and NSE. Reliance NU Suntech, an arm of Reliance Power, has won the country's single largest 930 MW solar project with 1,860 MWh battery energy storage system from SECI. The subsidiary has secured the solar with storage project in an e-reverse auction held by SECI on Monday, parent Reliance Power said in a statement on Wednesday. —*PTI*

DESPITE UNCERTAINTIES

Economic growth to regain pace by March: Goyal

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Thursday expressed confidence that India's economic growth by the end of this fiscal will be back on track despite global uncertainties and this year also, India will be the world's fastest growing economy.



"We had an election in the first quarter.

During elections, policy making and decisions on next steps of growth or infrastructure spending slow down, and there is a lag effect," Goyal said at Times Network's India Economic Conclave in the national capital.

"But from the initial numbers for this quarter, the third quarter show, the festive spending, the rebound in rural growth, the way banks are now seeing traction back again and the way infrastructure spending has come back on track, I think by the time we close the year in March, we will be back on track," he said.

The minister was replying to a question whether the 5.4 per cent gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the July–September quarter worried him.

India's economic growth slowed to near two-year low of 5.4 per cent in the July–September quarter because of poor performance of manufacturing and mining sectors, but the country continued to remain the fastest-growing large economy.

The GDP had expanded by 8.1 per cent in the July–September quarter of the preceding fiscal. The previous low level of GDP growth at 4.3 per cent was recorded in the third quarter of financial year 2022–23 —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

GOVT SEEKS PARL NOD FOR EXTRA ₹44K CR SPENDING

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

The government on Thursday sought Parliament's nod for additional net cash spending of Rs 44,143 crore in the current fiscal.

The first batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2024-25 was tabled in the Lok Sabha by Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary to seek approval of Parliament to authorise gross additional expenditure of Rs 87,762.56 crore.

Of this, the proposals involving net cash outgo aggregate to Rs 44,142.87 crore and gross additional expenditure, matched by savings of the Ministries/ Departments or enhanced receipts/recoveries, aggregates to Rs 43,618.43 crore.

This includes approval for spending Rs 6,593.73 crore towards the fertiliser subsidy scheme

The additional spending includes Rs 6,593.73 crore towards the fertiliser subsidy scheme, about Rs 9,000 crore for agriculture and farmer welfare, and Rs 8,000 crore towards defence spendings.

It also includes expenditure of Rs 3,000 crore towards expenditure by the Ministry of External Affairs and Rs 4,800 crore towards expenditure by Home Ministry. —*PTI*

India needs $2.2T investment to be a $7T economy

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

India will require an investment of USD 2.2trn for infrastructure development to become USD 7trn economy by 2030, Real estate consultant Knight Frank India (KFI) said on Thursday, while stressing on the need of radical measures to encourage private participation in this area.

In its report, India Infrastructure: Reviving Private Investments, the KFI mentioned that "an estimated investment of USD 2.2trn into infrastructure development is imperative to support India's GDP size to expand to USD 7trn by 2030."

To achieve an economic size of USD 7trn by 2030, India's economy is required to grow at a CAGR of 10.1 per cent between 2024 and 2030, it added. KFI CMD Shishir Baijal said, "Strong impetus on infrastructural development and increased budgetary allocation by government has led to India's ranking in the Logistics Performance Index improve from 54 in 2014 to 38 in 2023."

In the last few years, he said, there has been aggressive push by the policy makers to significantly expand India's infrastructure.

Baijal said this widens the scope for private players to actively participate in India's infrastructure development and economic growth.

"However, there are certain bottlenecks. Hence, radical measures are required to induce a higher allocation of private investments towards infrastructure development to balance fiscal prudence to the government's budget and bring inclusive and long-term sustainable economic growth," he said. —*PTI*

EDIBLE OIL IMPORT UP 39% IN NOV: SEA

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

India's edible oil import rose 38.5 per cent to 15.9 lakh tonne in November mainly due to sharp jump in shipments of crude sunflower oil and crude soyabean oil, according to industry data.

On Thursday, Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) released the data of import of vegetable oil (edible and non-edible) for November.

As per the data, import of vegetable oils during November, the first month of the 2024-25 oil marketing year, rose 40 per cent to 16,27,642 tonne compared to 11,60,590 tonne a year ago.

Out of total vegetable oil import, India imported 15,90,301 tonne of edible oil in November as against 11,48,092 tonne in the same month last year. Import of non-edible oils increased to 37,341 tonne compared to 12,498 tonne in November 2023.

Oil marketing year runs from November to October.

In edible oil category, the import of RBD palmolein during November 2024 increased to 2,84,537 tonne compared to 1,71,069 tonne in the year-ago period. —*PTI*

Retail inflation eases to 5.48% in Nov: Govt data

Last week, the Reserve Bank raised the inflation projection for the current fiscal to 4.8 per cent from 4.5 per cent PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Retail inflation slowed to 5.48 per cent in November compared to 6.21 pc in October, mainly due to easing food prices, especially vegetables, according to government data released on Thursday.

According to Consumer Price Index (CPI) data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), the inflation in the food basked reduced to 9.04 per cent in November.

It was 10.87 per cent in October and 8.70 per cent in November 2023.

The CPI-based headline inflation increased from an average of 3.6 per cent during July-August to 5.5 per cent in September and further to 6.2 per cent in October 2024, the highest in more than a year since September 2023.

Last week, the Reserve Bank raised the inflation projection for the current fiscal to 4.8 per cent from 4.5 per cent. It also said that the lingering food price pressures are likely to keep headline inflation elevated in the December quarter.

Consumer price index (CPI)-based headline inflation increased from an average of 3.6 per cent during July-August to 5.5 per cent in September and further to 6.2 per cent in October 2024. —*PTI*

HC rejects plea in Coca-Cola adulteration case

MUMBAI, 12 DEC

Bombay High Court has refused to quash proceedings initiated against Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Private Limited by a magistrate's court in Maharashtra's Jalna district over the alleged sale of adulterated beverages.

During an inspection of the company's product 'Canada Dry', a sweetened carbonated drink, in 2001, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of Jalna district had found some fibrous substance and cobwebs inside the sealed bottles.

PHOTO: PTI

A stock of 321 bottles of 'Canada Dry' with an expiry date of December 12, 2001, was seized on July 27, 2001. After testing, a complaint was lodged against the company before the magistrate's court in Jalna for alleged contravention of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act.

In March 2010, the magistrate issued a notice to the company. The company, the India bottling business of global beverage major Coca-Cola, then moved the HC seeking quashing of the complaint and the notice.

The company in its plea claimed that there was a delay in lodging the complaint.

However, the bench refused to extend it, allowing criminal proceedings against the company, stalled for around 14 years, to continue —*PTI*

Inventurus , Vishal Mega Mart IPO fully subscribed

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Vishal Mega Mart's Rs 8,004 crore IPO was fully subscribed by the second day of its share sale, indicating strong investor demand.

The initial public offering (IPO) has attracted significant attention as it aims to raise funds for expansion and operational growth.

The positive subscription reflects market confidence in the retailer's prospects.

Meanwhile, the initial public offer of Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd, which provides healthcare support services, got subscribed 1.36 times on the first day of share sale on Thursday. The initial share sale received bids for 1,40,74,698 shares against 1,03,66,780 shares on offer, as per NSE data.

PHOTO: PTI

Inventurus Knowledge Solutions Ltd has collected Rs 1,120 crore from anchor investors.

Company's IPO is entirely an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 1.88 crore equity shares by promoters and individual shareholders, with no fresh issue component. —*PTI with agencies*

AHEAD OF GST COUNCIL MEET

Retailers oppose special 35% tax rate

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Indian Sellers Collective, an umbrella body of trade associations and sellers across the country, has urged the finance minister and the GST Council not to accept some of GST rate rationalisation suggestions, including the proposal for inclusion of a special rate of 35 per cent on some products.

The sellers' body is of the view that a fifth GST slab of 35 per cent on demerit goods, such as aerated beverages, cigarettes and tobacco, and pricing-based rate structure will materially and fundamentally alter the country's GST framework with devastating outcomes.

These recommendations violate both the letter and the spirit that it will be a "good and simple tax", the Collective said in a statement on Thursday ahead of the 55th GST Council meeting to be held on 21 December, 2024 at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.

The 55th GST Council meeting to be held on 21 December, at Jaisalmer, Rajasthan PHOTO: X

"On the contrary, it will hurt the profit margins of the retailers, lead to compliance nightmares and fuel a parallel economy," it said.

If the GoM recommendations are adopted by the upcoming GST Council meeting, all gains of the GST regime will be wiped out, causing permanent damage to the vast age-old retailer network of India, said Abhay Raj Mishra, a member and national coordinator of the Collective.

"A 35 per cent tax on demerit goods will exponentially grow their illicit market. A pricing-based rate structure will trigger either manipulation or re-engineering of business models to beat the system. For small and mid-tier sellers, this will mean compliance nightmares and a very high litigation risk," he said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

India is a big contender for WC: De Sloover

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Olympic and World Cup gold medallist Belgian hockey defender Arthur De Sloover feels the way India is progressing over the years, the country is a "big contender" for more glory on the world stage in the future. India secured back-to-back Olympic bronze medals in Tokyo and Paris, which came after their last gold medal feat at the 1980 Moscow Games. But a World Cup medal has been eluding India for a long time and the country last achieved glory at this stage in 1975 in Kuala Lumpur, where it won its only gold. De Sloover, who will be turning out for Hyderabad Toofans in the upcoming Hockey India League, alongside local star Nilakanta Sharma and Germany's Gonzalo Peillat, feels Indian hockey is on the right path.—*PTI*

Prasar Bharati to broadcast Hockey India League

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

The upcoming Hockey India League, which is being revived after seven years, will be telecast live on the country's national broadcaster, Prasar Bharati.The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard was signed in a ceremony between Abhishek Agarwal, Deputy Director General of Sports, Prasar Bharati, and Hockey India Secretary General Bhola Nath Singh.Set to commence on December 28 in Rourkela, HIL will be broadcast live across the nation through Doordarshan and Prasar Bharati's new OTT platform Waves. This edition of the HIL is path-breaking because it will feature the inaugural season of the women's league alongside the men's competition. —*PTI*

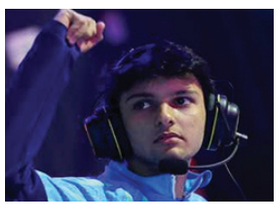


PHOTO: X

Patel's dream run at FIFAe World Cup ends in semis

RIYADH, 12 DEC

In the first-ever FIFAe World Cup ft. eFootball - Mobile, India's Danial Patel's sensational run ended in the semi-finals after going down to Malaysia at the SEF Arena here on Wednesday. The 17-year-old, who had taken the group stage by storm, pumping in 20 goals to finish second, registered a stunning comeback win against Turkiye's YUSA in the quarter-finals. The knockout stage was held in a best-of-three format. Turkiye nicked the first game 2-1 in extra time despite Danial equalising with the last kick of the game in normal time.—*PTI*

Bihar govt transfers Moin-ul-Haq Stadium to BCA

PATNA, 12 DEC

The Bihar government transferred the registry of the land for Moin-ul-Haq Stadium to the Bihar Cricket Association (BCA) on a long-term 30-year lease. This is a major step taken by the Bihar government and the Bihar Cricket Association (BCA) to host international cricket matches in Patna and to provide state cricketers with a state-of-the-art international cricket stadium. Additionally, the government waived off the land registry fee of approximately Rs 37 crore, as previously announced. The registry documents were signed on behalf of the Bihar government by Sports Department Director Mahendra Kumar, and behalf of BCA by its president Tiwari.—*PTI*

TN's Velammal Vidyalaya ready to welcome Gukesh

It's Velammal's shiniest moment, which trains budding players

Chennai, 12 DEC

India's D Gukesh being congratulated after he defeated title-holder China's Ding Liren in the 14th and last game of the FIDE World Chess Championship 2024 *PHOTO: PTI*

The Velammal Vidyalaya at Mogappair in the western suburbs of the city slipped into a celebratory mood on Thursday evening, as D Gukesh, now the most famous name in the school muster, scripted history, becoming the youngest ever chess world champion. Gukesh outwitted Ding Liren 7.5-6.5 to unseat the Chinese from the highest seat in world chess.

It's the shiniest moment in the long history of the Velammal Institutions, the catalysing force behind the chess revolution in the city. While Gukesh and R Praggnanandhaa remain the brightest prodigies, the school offers expert training to hundreds of budding chess players.

"Chess has always been a part of the city's culture and the decision to make chess a part of the curriculum has helped it to boom. Of course, they also have a champion like Anand to look up to," S Velavan, the chess co-coordinator at the Velammal, said.

"Since most of the children coming here have a genuine interest in chess, we don't have to push them. They combine studies and chess well, and the students who play chess have done even better in their studies," Velavan added.

What he refers to here is the '7 to 17 program' introduced in schools by former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa in 2013, coinciding with that year's World Chess Championship between Viswanathan Anand and Magnus Carlsen which was held in the city.

Their dedicated approach has produced matching results too as Velammal Institutions won the World School Chess Championship for five successive years and both Gukesh and Praggnanandhaa were part of their squad in 2021.

It's not surprising then to see that several Grandmasters have come out of this school since 2005 -- SP Sethuraman, Leon Mendonca, K Priyadharshan, B Adhiban, Vishnu Prasanna, Visakh NR, Vignesh NR, M Karthikeyan, C Aravindh, Karthik Venkataraman, V Pranav, S Bharath, Arjun Kalyan, P Karthikeyan, N Srinath.

Prominent women GMs from the school are Varshini S, daughter of Velavan, Vaishali R, sister of Praggnanandhaa, R Rakshitta, and B Savitha Shri. —*PTI*

BWF WORLD TOUR FINALS

Gayatri Gopichand Pullela and Treesa Jolly of India play a shot against Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan of Malaysia *PHOTO: PTI*

Treesa-Gayatri pair wins 2nd match to keep semis hopes alive

HANGZHOU, 12 DEC

The Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand defeated the Malaysian combination of Pearly Tan and Thinaah Muralitharan in straight games in their second Group A tie to keep alive their semifinal hopes at the BWF World Tour Finals here on Thursday.

Treesa and Gayatri, the only Indians to have qualified for the season-ending tournament, beat their opponents 21-19 21-19 in just 46 minutes to stay afloat in the competition.

Earlier on Wednesday, the Indians had lost to world No.1 Liu Sheng Shu and Tan Ning of China in their opening group match.

Treesa and Gayatri had lost 20-22 22-20 21-14 to Sheng and Tan, who had claimed a silver medal at the Paris Olympics.

The Indians are currently placed second behind the Chinese and will need to win against the Japanese pairing of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida on Friday to book their semifinal berth.

Treesa and Gayatri started on an aggressive note and surged to a 6-2 lead in the opening game before the Malaysians roared back and it went neck-and-neck after that.

But the Indians kept their composure in the final stages to pocket the first game.

The second game too was a close affair till the first five points before the Malaysians took a slender lead.

It was again a tight battle till 19 points but the Indians once again held their nerves and pocketed two consecutive points to seal the match. —*PTI*

LET QUALIFIER

Sneha, Amandeep and Avani well placed to reach final

MARRAKECH, 12 DEC

At least four Indian women golfers playing at different venues are in a good position to reach the final qualifier at Lalla Aicha Q-School for the Ladies European Tour.

They are Sneha Singh, Vidhatri Urs, Amandeep Drall, and Avani Prashanth, while Ridhima Dilawari and Nayanika Sanga can make a last-round dash to get into the final qualifier as the Top-23 and ties are likely to make the final stage.

Sneha, the winner of the domestic Hero Women's Order of Merit in 2023, is lying second at the Par-73 Noria Golf Club in Marrakech with rounds of 69-73 and trailed leader, Annika Borrelli of South Africa, who carded 69-70, by three shots.

Sneha Singh *PHOTO: PTI*

Ridhima (79-77) was T-35, Jasmine Shekar (77-88) was T-55 and Oviya Reddi (80-88) was T-58.

Also well-placed to make it to the final qualifier was Vidhatri Urs (68-77), who was tied for the lead after the first round. She slipped in the second but is very much in line to make the final stage at Samanah. Neha Tripathi (80-80) was T-55.

At the Rotana Golf Club, Amandeep (71-73) was even par at the Par-72 course, while Avani (73-72) at 1-over was T-14. Nayanika (77-74) was T-38.

At Palm Ourika India's Shweta Mansingh (73-80) was T-40 and Durga Nittur (73-82) was T-48.

England's Rosie Belsham is in front at Samanah with Finland's Elina Nummenpaa and French amateur Vanessa Bouvet top at Rotana, while Wales' Darcey Harry leads at Palm Golf Ourika. Meanwhile, American Annika Borrelli is in front of Noria. —*PTI*

BGT: Kohli meets team, Rohit faces semi-new ball

Brisbane, 12 DEC

He used to be the cynosure of all eyes at training sessions during his captaincy days and Virat Kohli was once again the center of attention as he addressed his teammates here on Thursday.

After the demoralising 10-wicket defeat in the Adelaide day/night game, the visitors needed a bit of inspiration going into the crucial third Test of the series, and the youngsters in the side couldn't have got a better mentor than 'King' Kohli himself to guide them with his words of wisdom.

Virat Kohli *PHOTO: PTI*

The team huddles before the start of the training session have been a constant feature for years now and Kohli used to do a lot of talking during his days in charge.He did take a back seat once he left captaincy but with skipper Rohit also under immense pressure after four straight defeats, the senior-most player (in terms of Test debut) had to take the initiative ahead of the match starting here on Saturday.With vice-captain Jasprit Bumrah by his side, Kohli was seen speaking animatedly to the group and everyone, including Rohit, listened to him with rapt attention.

Rohit faces both new and semi-new balls in netsUnlike before the pink ball Test, Rohit looked in far better shape during his net session at the Gabba but question marks remain over whether he would be back to opening the innings or stay put at No. 6.

On the day, while KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal once again faced the new ball at the nets, Rohit took on a slightly older Kookaburra at the beginning. Having faced that for some time, he did change nets with Rahul and also played a brand new red cherry for a while. —*PTI*

Veteran shooter Vijay reflects on last nationals

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

Olympic silver medallist Vijay Kumar on Thursday said the 67th National Shooting Championship will probably be his last competitive tournament, ending his long association with the event.

Vijay won a silver in a 25-meter rapid-fire pistol competition at the 2012 London Olympics.

"This will be my 23rd national championship and probably be my last competitive one as I am planning to stop competitive training and shift to coaching.

"I might continue to participate in national-to-national competition to remain in touch with the sport but I am planning to stop competitive shooting," said the London Games medal winner.

Vijay is already doing private coaching and has mentored many shooters in the Indian Army.

Sharing his plans, he said, "I want to guide and inspire the younger generation. My goal is to share the knowledge and insights I've gained over the years with them, and help develop the skills necessary to compete at the international level, excel in the competitive arena, and ultimately bring pride to our country."

Olympic silver medallist Vijay Kumar *PHOTO: PTI*

Talking about the record number of participants and the legacy he is leaving behind, he said, "Of course, I feel proud of the progress we've made.

"If we look back, there were only around 400-500 participants, but now, we have over 13,000, which is a record number. This surge in numbers means that more talented individuals are emerging, and I am confident that it will result in more medals for our country at the Olympics."

- A total of 40 teams will be represented at the 67th shooting nationals including almost all states and union territories as well as those representing the armed forces and public institutions like the ONGC and the Railways

A total of 40 teams will be represented at the 67th shooting nationals including almost all states and union territories as well as those representing the armed forces and public institutions like the ONGC and the Railways.

All top shooters of the country will be participating in the nationals, and their scores will be counted when the Indian team for the 2025 international season is chosen. —*PTI*

Niki to lead India U-19 in inaugural Asia Cup

NEW DELHI, 12 DEC

PHOTO: PTI

Niki Prasad will lead India U-19 in the inaugural edition of the junior women's Asia Cup scheduled to take place in Kuala Lumpur from December 15 to 22.

All matches will be held at the Bayuemas Cricket Oval. Sanika Chalke has been named vice-captain while lanky Gujarat Giants seamer MD Shabnam has also been included in the squad.

India U19 is placed in Group A along with Pakistan and Nepal, while Group B consists of Bangladesh, Sand ri Lanka and hosts Malaysia.

India will meet arch-rivals Pakistan on the opening day of the competition on December 15 followed by a game against Nepal on December 17.

The top two teams from each group will qualify for the Super Fours and the top two from the Super Four will play in the final on December 22.

Squad: Niki Prasad (Captain), Sanika Chalke (Vice-captain), G Trisha, Kamalini G (WK), Bhavika Ahire (WK), Ishawari Awasare, Mithila Vinod, Joshitha VJ, Sonam Yadav, Parunika Sisodiya, Kesari Drithi, Aayushi Shukla, Anandita Kishor, MD Shabnam, Nandhana S

Standbys: Hurley Gala, Happy Kumari, G Kavya Sree, Gayatri Survase. —*PTI*

Guardiola: Tough period but I'm pleased with our play

TURIN, 12 DEC

After facing a 2-0 loss to Juventus in the Champions League at Allianz Stadium, Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said that City were going through a 'tough' period but reiterated his full confidence in his side's capacity to bounce back to form quickly.

Second-half goals from Dusan Vlahovic and Weston McKennie secured victory for Juventus despite Manchester City dominating possession and territory.

The defeat continued City's disappointing form, leaving them with just one win in their last 10 matches and placing them in 22nd position in the 36-team Champions League table with two games still to play. "Of course it's tough. Except for one or two games in this period that were not good, we played quite similarly, and I give credit to Juventus. I don't think it was a defensive mistake much. That was not the reason (we lost), other games yes but not today. —*PTI*

AT JUVENTUS

City slip to Champions League defeat

TURIN, 12 DEC

City suffered Champions League disappointment as Pep Guardiola's side went down to a 2-0 defeat away at Juventus in our latest European clash.

Though the Blues enjoyed much of the possession and territory in Turin, second-half goals from Dusan Vlahovic and Weston McKennie proved decisive.

City strove every sinew to try and break a well-drilled Juventus side for whom goalkeeper Michele Di Gregorio produced two fine saves either side of half-time but it was the hosts who prevailed.

The result left City on eight points in our Champions League campaign from six games played, lying in 22nd place in the 36-strong composite table with two matches left.

Result left City lying in 22nd place in the match *PHOTO: X/@MANCITY*

Though a noisy and partisan home crowd sought to summon up an intimidating atmosphere at the home of the Old Lady, it was City who initially clicked into gear at the Allianz Stadium.

With the recalled Jack Grealish deployed in a more central role and Bernardo Silva operating on the right flank, Pep Guardiola's troops were straight onto the offensive dominating territory and possession.

But with the hosts content to sit back and pack bodies behind the ball whilst seeking to pounce on the break, it more resembled a game of chess in the initial stages as City probed and tested the Italians' resistance.

However, it was Juve with the first meaningful effort of the night in 20 minutes amidst what proved a cagey and slow burn of an opening half. —*PTI*